The University Of Sheffield.

Access to Electronic Thesis

Author:	Dr Keith Green
Thesis title:	Music and the English Lyric Poem: Explorations in Conceptual Blending
Qualification:	MMus

If this electronic thesis has been edited by the author it will be indicated as such on the title page and in the text.

Music and the English Lyric Poem:

Explorations in Conceptual Blending

Keith Michael Charles Green

Thesis submitted for the award of Master of Music

Department of Music

May 2011

Music and the English Lyric Poem: Explorations in Conceptual Blending

CONTENTS

Chapter One:
Preliminaries and Theory

> Of one thing we can be certain; what Hanslick called 'the morganatic marriage of words and music' is the least destructible of all musical elements (Gerald Finzi, *Crees Lecture*, 1954).

> We now think of them [music and poetry] as proceeding upon quite different principles and without dependence upon each other, coming together only in such 'impure' collaborations as opera. But the origins and histories of the two arts make them more legitimate 'sisters' or 'spouses' than the more commonly paired painting and poetry. Music and poetry begin together, and the frequent separations in their history lead to equally frequent reconciliations (Winn, 1981: 1).

The Nature of the Problem

The relationship between poetry and music, whether considered in their separate domains or when, for instance, poetry functions in a musical context, is an intimate one. It is commonplace to speak of the 'music' of poetry and the 'poetical' aspects of music, (for example in certain kinds of programme music) and poetry and music have long been combined in song, where Hanslick's 'morganatic marriage' is most evident. The most obvious, almost tautologous, similarity – that both music and poetry, when heard, are *sonic* mediums – betrays a more complex issue. As Roger Scruton observes, music, as sound, is 'presented to a single privileged sense-modality' (1997: 1). The problem is that words, when sung, are also sounds that are received by this sense-modality and there is immediately a potential conflict between the two, for we have two aesthetic and communicative elements combining in a single form and presented to the same sense (speech of course is also sound, although prototypically without the aesthetic dimension). There is a cognitive difficulty in attending to two channels inputting to this same sense at the same time. Indeed, Lowbury et al. go as far as to state that 'a poem transmitted

through the medium of song cannot at the same time be enjoyed as a poem in its own right' (1970: 32).

A second, and related issue, might be called the problem of 'double intentionality' and is closely linked to the phenomenon of conceptual blending, explored here. Poetry, as David Lodge (1977, and elsewhere) among others, has shown, is fundamentally metaphorical, and metaphor is a kind of conceptual blend. When something is compared with something else (something it is not normally compared with) two objects of perception are locked into one, as in the following sentence:

Ships ploughed the sea

Here, the *tenor* (action of digging: agricultural discourse) and the *ground* (action of sailing, nautical discourse) of the metaphor are seen not as separate elements, but as one, new element, a blend of the two. Such 'double intentionality' is an aesthetic phenomenon associated with art forms, and is further demonstrated by an example from the visual arts:

> When I see a face in a picture ... I am not seeing a picture *and* a face; nor am I seeing a resemblance between the picture and a face. The face and the picture are fused in my perception (Scruton, 1997:87).

The same can be said of music, for when we hear the sounds that constitute music we also hear something which is not sound and which might be described as its life and movement. Metaphor and song are linked in the action of the integration of one mode or element with another:

> When a composer sets words to music, he is doing something not unlike the person who coins a metaphor. He is bringing one thing to *bear* on another; bringing music to *bear* on a situation identified through words, just as the poet describes one thing in terms of another and so forges the relation between the two (Scruton, 1997: 366).

In poetry that has been set to music, then, we have what might be called a cognitive or semiotic 'overload': two inputs to the same sense-modality and two experiences of 'double

intentionality'. Another way of seeing this relation is suggested by cognitive linguists: that song, for example, represents a 'conceptual blend' of two aesthetic experiences. Certain shared elements combine to form a unique imaginative site.

A third issue is also related to the similarities, rather than the differences, between poetry and music and to a certain extent between language in general and music. It is often assumed that poetry itself is (or possesses) a kind of 'music' – that it has rhythm, intonation and a kind of melody – which makes its setting to music a redundancy. For Wagner poetry resists setting to music for precisely this reason; it is 'heightened speech' and already possesses its own musicality. Such a view left Wagner 'completely unable to imagine an authentic relationship between verse and melody' (in Clayton, 2008: 43). On the other hand, the notion that the combination of poetry and music results in a transcendent art form has a history going back at least as far as Henry Purcell (Barker, 1994: 43). The shared characteristics of poetry and music can suggest one of two things: that such similarities make the setting of poetry in a musical context a troublesome site because they are competing for signification; or that their union produces a new genre, a hybrid, a blend of the two modes where there is alignment, rather than competition, in terms of signification.

A fourth and final issue here is that of structure. The repeating of musical material is one of the features that gives tonal music its shape. Indeed, much music depends on the repetition or near-repetition of phrases and themes. Poetry only repeats if it is strophic and has regular metre, or if there are recurring images or motifs. Is music to underwrite these instances of repetition, or to ignore and override them, imposing upon the structure its own features of repetition? With reiterations in both music and poetry, the second occurrence, for example, will in music be generally the strongest, but in poetry the weakest, if it is a lexical or grammatical, rather than metrical reiteration. This sharing of an

element but not of its function is crucial to our understanding of the potential for cognitive blending, as I shall show.

Research on Poetry and Music

As Jonathan Dunsby notes, the literature on the relationship between words and music is 'vast' (2004:1). Certainly in the past thirty years or so a large body of research has developed on both the nature of song (Scher, 1992; Zbikowski, 2002, among others) and the relationship between the two signifying systems of language and music (Lerdahl and Jackendoff, 1983; Lidov, 2003; Patel, 2008). Much of the latter is concerned with the investigation of the properties of both language and music and their analogous relations, where in particular the focus has been on questions relating to the possible existence of a syntax and semantics of music, and whether such terms, when applied to music, are anything more than just useful metaphors. Written at the height of Noam Chomsky's influence in linguistic theory, Leonard Bernstein's pioneering Harvard Lectures of 1973 investigated, in a loosely theoretical fashion, not only the semantics, syntax and phonology of music (the three main linguistic categories) but also the aesthetic 'super-structure' which music is said to possess in analogous relation to poetry (Bernstein, 1976: 79). A more detailed analysis of the syntax of music in particular has been developed by Lerdahl and Jackendoff (1983), still working within the Chomskyan tradition, and the pursuit of a generative theory of music is also evident in the work of Sloboda (1985). Others pursuing a similar path in the area of semiotic analysis include Nattiez (1975) and Ruwet (1972), while Lidov inverts the question by asking *Is Language a Music?* (2005).

The semantics of music has perhaps exercised a more diverse range of thinkers, as the whole question of musical meaning has a long and distinguished (and troubled) history. Leonard Meyer's seminal work on musical signification, *Emotion and Meaning in Music*

(1956) was followed by Deryck Cooke's *The Language of Music* (1959). Philosophers such as Langer (1953), Kivy (2002) and Scruton (1997) see musical meaning in the context of a more general aesthetics of signification. Postmodern theories of meaning have applied to music in the work of Lawrence Kramer (2002) and Jonathan Dunsby (2004). Earlier considerations of the relationship, such as Sidney Lanier's *Music and Poetry: Essays Upon Some Aspects and Inter-Relations of the Two Arts* (1914) show an emerging theoretical framework. Lanier states:

> With the great majority of the human race the musical tones which are most frequently heard are those of the human voice. But these tones – which are as wholly devoid of intellectual signification in themselves as if they were enounced from a violin or flute – are usually produced along with certain vowel and consonantal combinations which go to make up words, and which consequently have conventional meanings. In this way significations belonging exclusively to the *words* of a song are often transferred by the hearer to the *tones* of the melody (1914: 5).

Here, Lanier recognises the conventional nature of word-meaning and suggests that this meaning is projected onto the music so that its signification is the signification of the words. For Lanier, in the blend of words and music in song it is the words that are the dominant carriers of signification.

The relationship between words and music, rather than the relations that may exist on an abstract level between language in general and music, has seen an explosion of research interest in recent years, and developing from this is work on the relationship specifically between music and poetry. The difference between those theories relating to 'language and music' and those to 'words and music' is that the latter is an inquiry into not only the semantics of music (perhaps not even primarily) but also, crucially, the role of words in musical contexts, whether in song, opera or other vocal genre. Edward Cone's study of song in *The Composer's Voice* (1974) has influenced a number of thinkers, most notably Steven Paul Scher (1972 and elsewhere), whose work in words and music studies addresses some of the crucial issues in the area. Words and music studies, as a result has

come to be known (after Scher) as *melopoetics* and has spawned a new generation of thinkers, such as Suzanne Lodato, Walter Bernhart and Werner Wolf, researching the issues relating to the function of words in musical contexts. James Anderson Winn's *Unsuspected Eloquence: A History of the Relations between Poetry and Music* (1981) provides a detailed and broad-ranging analysis of the complex developments of poetry in music and music in poetry from ancient times to the early twentieth century serialists.

The literature on the genre of song, in particular the German Lied, is also vast and wide-ranging, with Lawrence Kramer's (1984) investigation into nineteenth century song providing fruitful suggestions for further research. Yonatan Malin (2010) investigates the intimate relationship between words and music in the genre with particular reference to rhythm and meter. Jonathan Dunsby (2004) and Nicholas Cook (1990, 1998) place the song, in particular in postmodern and multi-media contexts respectively. The development of English song has been described and analysed by a number of commentators, most notably Stephen Banfield in his influential work *Sensibility and English Song* (1985), covering as it does the most important English songwriters of the twentieth century, and Trevor Hold (2002), who covers English song written in the period spanning two significant figures in its history: Parry and Finzi.

The work on song is based essentially on two perspectives. In the first, theories of the relation of words and music are brought to bear on song eras, song cycles, or individual songs. Such an approach is exemplified in the work of Kramer, among others. The second approach grows out of an analysis of the songs and composers themselves, and brings in any theory of poetic and musical relations as and when needed. This approach is to be found in the work of Hold and Banfield, for example. The division here is not absolute,as each approach will show a combination of analyses of discrete musical works with theories,

both implicit and explicit, of musical and poetic meaning. Whatever the methodology, writers on song in general appear to agree with Dunsby when he states:

> Music and words, words with music, surely amount to a special kind of musical experience, although we might speculate, and learn from the prehistory of human kind, that it is also the most natural kind of musical experience in its plenitude of engagement with human faculties (2004: 4).

Firmly rooted in the first approach, *melopoeia* has drawn its theoretical and methodological impulse from the discipline of cognitive science, as I go on to show. However, the basic premise is the same, that somehow the experience of combining music and poetry in song provides a unique, yet 'natural' aesthetic experience which is a complex blend of two forms. Research continues into the precise nature of that blend.

Although all of these investigations have thrown up useful insights into the nature of the relationship between words and music, an analysis of song that combines the insights of poetic theory with those of music theory in the scrutiny of particular songs has not been fully developed. Many theorists are content to make broad assumptions about the nature of poetry and to focus more on the theories of musical signification, looking at how a poem is 'set' and whether that setting is appropriate to individual words or phrases or to the structure of the poem as a whole. As the poetic text normally 'exists' before the music, it is easy to see that any setting is a product of 'the expression of subjective responses to the mood of the poem or to its emotional associations, the evocations of its images and words' (Banfield, 1985: 324). Thus for many, the poem is a 'given' which despite its ambiguity, its form, its semantics and its syntax is nevertheless a relatively straightforward work of art that is to be 'presented' to its musical accomplice. What is missing from many of the analyses of either individual songs or of song in general is a theory of poetic communication, whether historicised to a particular period or used generically to cover the functioning of poetry in general.

In order to understand the complex relationship between music and poetry, and to see where the two modes might work together and where they might be in a more problematic relation, it is necessary to look at theories not only of linguistic structure and meaning, but also theories of the poetic function. Some of these are brought together in recent work in cognitive science, particularly with that of the notion of *conceptual blending*. Developed from the work of Gilles Fauconnier and George Lakoff in particular, conceptual blending is itself a blend of semiotics, linguistics, psychology and philosophy. Song, for example, is seen as a cognitive blend of words and music resulting in a hybrid imaginative form. To fully grasp the notion of such blending, poetic and linguistic theory must be combined with, broadly speaking, analysis of the semiosis of music – that is, the way that music signifies, and is expressive of, certain emotions or moods. In these respects the work of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1974) will prove useful as a starting point. Saussure's work has had significant influence not only in the many diverse fields of language study and linguistics, but also in broader cultural theory, including perhaps most particularly, literary studies. A consideration of Saussure's work on vertical and horizontal relations in language will prove fruitful in its application to music and its relevance to the theory of conceptual blending. For a conceptual blend to be realised both elements of the blend must share some topographical features (see Chapter Three). The realms of horizontal and vertical ordering of elements provide a base from which such elements might operate.

Saussure's Contribution

In the *Cours de Linguistique Générale* (1917) Ferdinand de Saussure posits the now familiar distinction between *syntagmatic* and *associative* dimensions of language. These are essentially *relations* between linguistic elements, the former being the axis of combination and the latter the axis of selection. In a word, or any linguistic sign, for example, discrete elements such as phonemes combine in linear fashion. For example, in the lexical item

'poetry' the separate phonemes (when spoken) *p, o, e, t, r* and *i* (*p-oʉ-e-t-ri:*) combine in that particular order to make the sound *po et ri.* In the graphic representation, it is letters that combine to form the complex grapheme. Thus a word or linguistic sign is a chain of elements along the syntagmatic or horizontal axis, and language is fundamentally linear in aspect. At every level, elements are 'chained' together in a horizontal, or syntagmatic, relation. Saussure's example 'Dieu est bon' ('God is good') shows how each element is related to that which both precedes and follows it (Saussure, 1974: 123).

However, a vertical axis also operates for at every point in the chain substitutions can be made, and these substitutional possibilities are what constitute the *associative* axis, or axis of choice. Associative relations are more vague in some respects, and later commentators have modified Saussure's definition and have preferred the term *paradigmatic*. For Saussure associative relations exist between an element and any other element to which it is not syntagmatically related – that is, is not naturally part of the syntagmatic context in which the element operates. For example, a lexical item such as 'dancing' may be associated semantically with other collocating verbs such as 'moving', 'waltzing' or 'jiving'; or it may be grammatically associated with almost any other non-finite (progressive aspect) verb form, such as 'driving', or 'cooking', even if there is no necessary semantic association; or it may be associated with any other item by virtue of certain phonological similarities when heard ('dark', 'prancing', in R.P.). This has important implications when we come to look at the language of poetry and the language of music, particularly with regard to the phenomenon of 'conceptual blending', where the relationship between poetry and music is explored through an investigation into the cognitive mechanisms that they might share. Saussure stated that associative relations were 'outside discourse' and that 'their seat is in the brain; they are part of the inner storehouse that makes up the language of each speaker' (123). However, associative, or paradigmatic, relations are also 'restricted' by virtue of their place in the syntagmatic chain,

despite Saussure's claim that they are 'not supported by linearity' (123). Substitutions are limited by certain restrictions relevant to the particular level of linguistic activity and to the particular language in question. At the level of the phoneme, for instance, we could substitute *d* for *p* and get the sound word 'doetry' (*d-oʊ-e-t-r i:*). The combination of sounds is perfectly acceptable in terms of English phonology, but it is *semantically* deviant. If on the other hand we substitute a *p* for the *o* we get 'ppetry' (*pp-e-t-r -i:*) – a combination ill-formed phonologically and deviant semantically (in English). We can see that the initial consonant-cluster *pp* is not generally part of the English phonological system if in initial position (note that it is acceptable, graphologically, in a word such as 'apply' – that is, when the letters occur in medial position).

Syntagmatic(horizontal) and associative (vertical) relations of elements are intimately connected, for each element can only combine with others from in general a finite list – particularly in the case of phonological elements. The relationship is apparent further up the linguistic rank – for example in syntactic relations. Let us take a simple sentence:

Poetry is verbal art

The syntactic arrangement of the lexical and grammatical parts (*Subject*, *Verb*, *Complement*) is expressed in linear fashion. In English, where word order is paramount, this particular syntactic ordering is coherent and 'unbreakable' – that is, any other order will produce a different sentence or be ill-formed:

Is verbal art poetry

Verbal poetry art is

Here, substitutions are also possible at every word-point. We could substitute 'literature' for 'poetry' giving a perfectly well-formed and plausible clause: 'Literature is verbal art'. 'Literature' is an appropriate substitution semantically because it is a superordinate to the

hyponym 'poetry'. However, if the line were part of a poem, for example, the substitution might not work at the syllabic level, 'literature' having four and 'poetry' having three syllables.

A *semantically* ill-formed substitution might be:

Dogs is verbal art

Here the item substituted paradigmatically is also unacceptable *grammatically,* the subject not agreeing in number with the verb.

These examples can be extended further, to the level of discourse, where discourse elements can be substituted for other elements – for example in the linear arrangement of a story. Whatever the level of linguistic activity, the crucial relationship is between elements which are chosen (paradigmatic) and combined (syntagmatic) with others. This Saussurean notion of selection and combination in language has had far-reaching implications for study of other arts, its use providing fruitful analyses of non-linguistic forms, too, where any element is selected from a paradigm and combined with another element. During the heyday of structuralism and semiotics during the 1960s and 70s it was presumed that language was the pre-eminent semiotic system: the 'most important of all these systems' as Saussure states, and that the model it demonstrated can be applied to other forms of human communication particularly associated with the arts (Saussure 1974: 16). Language, however, has one advantage over these other forms: it can be used to talk about itself. In this sense it is potentially self-reflexive: and can be used as a meta-discourse. No other sign-system appears to have this capacity. We use language to talk about language, but we cannot use architecture, for example, to talk about architecture, except in the metaphorical sense.

Music, like language, has both a graphic and phonic form, which exist in space and time respectively. It also has, as many commentators have noted (see, for example, Lerdahl and Jackendoff, 1983), the kind of vertical and horizontal relations that are part of the language system. It is important to outline the key similarities in the light of syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations because the extent to which music and language (and further, poetry) share structural, as well as aesthetic, elements will determine then the extent to which they can be said to form a conceptual blend of imaginative form.

One might see a musical phrase as 'linear' in that its notes occur sequentially in time; and in its graphic form, conventionally, the notes proceed in a manner similar to language – that is, from left to right (as in the English language), horizontally ordered. This linearity is thus temporal (when heard) and spatial (when seen) and is therefore analogous to language. Of course, many contemporary scores, in a general movement since the 1950s away from conventional notation, have a very different visual structure – often non-linear. Composers such as Luciano Berio also experiment with a kind of musical multi-layering and visual aspect of their scores which suggests a move towards the visual arts and away from the linguistic. We are now just as likely to talk of the *textures* and the *drama* of a contemporary piece of music as we are its language. In general it appears that although we still talk about the musical 'language' of a particular composer or piece, the linguistic analogy has weakened in the search for new ways of expression and new sites of meaning. This can be accounted for in part (but not entirely) by the rejection of tonality; the tonal system was much closer to the idea of a linguistic system with its coherent notions of vertical and horizontal relations. The following example from John Cage's *Freeman Études* demonstrates that even with conventional notation Cage's piece defies the traditional notions of horizontal movement; and this near impossible (to play) piece is loaded with vertical gestures. This is the beginning of Étude No. 18, from Book II of *Freeman Études* (Cage, 1980):

XVIII

The linear movement of this piece is inhibited by an almost obsessive cluster of vertical commands and connexions, which the graphic presentation of the score clearly projects.

The idea of the linearity of music, however, is not a transcendent, essential quality, but a product of a particular historical context. Indeed, as Jonathan Kramer has argued, musical linearity is part of a much broader picture of linear thought in general, though still rooted to a particular historical period. He states:

> In music, the quintessential expression of linearity is the tonal system. Tonality's golden age coincides with the height of linear thinking in Western culture; having roots in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries tonality became fully developed shortly after 1600 (Kramer 1981: 539).

As I go on to show, this coincides with the development of printing and the movement of reading 'from ear to eye'. Such a coincidence has important consequences for the coming together of the modes of poetry and music.

Music also has 'vertical' relations in that at every point in, say, a melody, a different pitch might be chosen in combination with other pitches, and as with language, there are restrictions on these substitutions, where each choice on the vertical axis will suggest possibilities for subsequent pitches along the horizontal axis. In addition, each note choice may imply a further vertical ordering, or harmony. In tonal music only certain notes are substitutable while remaining 'in key', while any movement out of the diatonic framework will be deemed correct or incorrect according to the intuitions of the hearers in a way

similar to the linguistic intuitions of native speakers noted by Noam Chomsky (1957 and *elsewhere*). A musical phrase, most particularly a tonal one, works by selection and combination in a manner similar to that of language (see, for example, Bernstein, 1973). However, the kind of vertical relations in particular reveal some differences often overlooked by those keen to retain the semiotic link between language and music. As far as the *associative* (vertical*)* possibilities of the musical element are concerned, the issue is more vague and complex that that of language. In what sense, we might ask, is a musical element – say, a chord in context – 'associated' with any other element? The most obvious way, perhaps, is with the various possibilities for each chord. For example, a major triad might be associated, typically, with the triad with its inversions, an added sixth or seventh, or perhaps sharpened fifth; in other words, chords that are variations on a kernel structure much like the idea of grammatical transformations from a base or kernel sentence. Some of these 'associations' are likely to be more plausible than others; a simple major triad will not normally suggest a major triad that, in jazz terminology, has been 'altered' – that is, as many notes of the chord as possible have been added, flattened or sharpened, so we get a chord such as C7,#4,b7,b9,#9 –usually abbreviated to C7 alt. The altered chord can nevertheless be seen as a 'version' of that kernel chord, C, and therefore part of the paradigm. This putative paradigm, however, is dependent on the musico-cognitive context in which it occurs. Just as a C major chord may be the tonic in C, the dominant in F and the subdominant in G (among other permutations), so the altered chord can be a function or pivot in a number of different tonal contexts.

In music it appears that there is a much more complex set of vertical relationships possible. It is traditionally conceived of that 'melody' is a 'horizontal' aspect of music, while harmony is 'vertical'. Thus a note may be given vastly different vertical contexts depending on the choice of harmony. Further, a note, of course, need not be sounded in vertical 'isolation', unless in a solo passage; it is invariably accompanied by other notes. But say a

C^1 is sounded on its own; obviously any other note (and possible micro-tones of that note) may be in associative relation with it, but again some will be more natural and 'plausible' than others. This is because, as Scruton suggests, listening to music is a cognitive activity . Drawing on the work of Chomsky, he states:

> The order of music is a *perceived* order. When we hear tones, we hear their musical implications in something like the way we hear the grammatical implications of words in a language. Of course, we probably do not know the theory of musical organization, cannot say in words what is going on when the notes of a Haydn quartet sound so right and logical. But nor do we know the theory of musical grammar, or the principles of syntactical construction, even though we can identify a sentence as an intelligible piece of English. Maybe you could say that we have *tacit* knowledge of grammar, as Chomsky does (Scruton, 1997: 18).

This 'tacit' knowledge extends to the paradigmatic, associative or vertical aspects of music, as well as the horizontal or syntagmatic.

There does not seem to be anything comparable in language, however, to the multi-layering of vertical relationships such as that exemplified by chords, where elements are sounding simultaneously. We can only utter one word at a time in sequence. If multiple voices are sounding at the same time (in ordinary speech) it is not harmony that is created, but linguistic and aural chaos, while in polyphonic vocal music words and phrases can be sung in repetitive harmonic layers which attempt to defy the linearity of the music's progression. Language is thus in this respect *more* purely linear than music, if we define linear as that which is motivated primarily by the syntagmatic axis. There are many difficulties and paradoxes associated with this view, however, not the least that if we conceive rather of linearity as the sequential revealing of elements, then despite its greater vertical complexity, music is driven relentlessly on through its temporal sequence. Further, poetry can be thought of as a 'vertical' genre: when we read poetry we do not do so in a strictly linear fashion, partly because (in general) its form suggests vertical movement and partly because we look for vertical connexions between elements, for example in locating a

lexical set, when reading. It can also be seen as 'vertical' in the sense of its temporal logic. In lyric poetry, unlike narrative, time is often 'suspended' in a distillation of a particular, often epiphanic, moment. There is less of a drive towards narrative closure and more of a tendency for the poem to resolve enigmatically or ambiguously.[1] One might say that poetry, at least poetry of a certain kind, is the one linguistic site where vertical reading is a necessity and in this sense it is situated close to music, where repetition, near-repetition and recapitulation suggest a vertical ordering of elements as well as a temporal, linear movement. Once more this has important consequences for the idea of the conceptual blend of music and poetry.

The architecture of vertical and horizontal relations in music is dependent on the tonal system but beginning in the mid-twentieth century composers sought not only to break down that system but also to free themselves from the imposing linearity of the musical experience. Jonathan Kramer develops the notion of increasingly fragmented linearity (leading to 'vertical' listening) in his influential paper 'New Temporalities in Music' (1981). Here he divides linearity into *directed linearity,* which is the product of the tonal system with its cadences, forward movement and resolution and *non-directed linearity,* where music begins to resist the goal-orientation of classic tonality. Non-linearity is typically *discontinuous* in that the 'goals' of the music shifted from one place to another, resulting in a generalised discontinuity. Where the music is non-linear and discontinuous, *vertical time* relations obtain. For Kramer, the listener makes a choice based on 'teleological expectations of fulfilment which fail to unfold'. This is not to suggest that such vertical time compositions are unstructured. On the contrary, they are highly structured

---

[1] It is important to note that the distinction between narrative and lyric modes is based on a difference of degree, not kind.

and patterned but in a way that is based upon the layering of sounds, rather than the relationships between successive elements. In short, the whole process is vertical *rather than* horizontal.

The idea of discontinuity and vertical relations is also explored by Richard Taruskin (2004) in his analysis of the music of Arnold Schoenberg. Taruskin suggests that the 'old 'tonal' constraints' 'impeded mutual relations':

> But thanks to the emancipation of dissonance, the horizontal and the vertical ... become interchangeable, and retrogressions or inversions are functionally (or rather functionlessly) equivalent (2004: 29).

Equivalence here is the equivalence of grammatical function, the forming of a paradigm rather than the unfolding of a linear progression.

A further possible example of music that seems to privilege the vertical over the horizontal is minimalism. The music of Terry Riley, Steve Reich, John Adams and Philip Glass, for example (all American minimalists) is sometimes referred to as 'phase' music, where 'incremental changes are gradually introduced to a basic undulating texture' (McCalla, 2003:150). As McCalla further states, the experience of such is music is such that 'one attends as fully as possible to the totality of where one is at a given moment, rather than where one has been or will be' (150). Because the music is not goal-directed and features repeated looped figures, there is no sense of development (except by increment) or closure.

Terry Riley's 'In C' (1964) is a sequence of fifty-three melodic fragments that are played in sequence by 'any number of any kind of instruments'. In the performing directions, Riley states that '[P]atterns are to be played consecutively with each performer having the freedom to determine how many times he or she will repeat each pattern before moving on to the next' (Performance directions). Performances average between

forty-five minutes and one hour and a half as each player works through the sequence with

repeated elements entirely at the discretion of the individuals involved. When everyone

reaches sequence number fifty three the work is effectively at an end, with a final

diminuendo and crescendo. The musical experience, despite the piece's length, is largely

vertical in that there is no progressive horizontal movement and no motivic or thematic

development save that which is thrown up by the contingencies of each performance. The

elements of indeterminate length and interpretative freedom do not find analogues in the

lyric poem, but there is one crucially analogous feature: the ending of the work is similar to

that of the lyric poem in that there is no drive to closure but a sudden statement, calling

the work to a close. Theoretically, this aspect would make a work such as 'In C' the

analogous site for the lyric poem. Although there is a sense of 'movement' in a lyric poem,

it is not a narrative movement:

The minimalist experience of dominant vertical relations does not help us, however, in accommodating the twin aspects of music and poetry. Despite the apparent stress on the paradigmatic in both modes, the fact that, as McCalla says, we attend to where one is at any particular moment suggests that the kind of vertical connexions typically made in experiencing poetry(where one does look back and forth) are not evident. Indeed, if such connexions are to be properly realised, they must be linked to the syntagmatic (horizontal) axis.

The semiotician Émile Benveniste, however, rejects the similarity of function of the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes, stating:

> the axis of simultaneity in music contradicts the very principle of the paradigmatic in language, which is the principle of selection, excluding all intra-segmental simultaneity; and the axis of sequences in music does not coincide with the syntagmatic axis of language either, since a musical sequence is compatible with the simultaneity of sounds, and since this sequence furthermore is not subject to any constraint of linkage or exclusion with respect to any sound or group of sounds whatsoever (Benveniste, in Thomas, 1995: 13).

This assertion is worth looking at in detail, as it is the basis of Benveniste's whole rejection of the language and music analogy.

Certainly, as I have stated, language does not and cannot operate an 'axis of simultaneity' in the way that music can. But that does not mean that the whole notion of the paradigmatic axis is to be discarded with respect to musical organisation. Taken together, the two axes have relevance for tonal grouping because, as with a sentence, elements must be selected and combined (thus exploiting the two axes) and in terms of our intuitions about music (similar to the Chomskyan idea of intuitions about language), some selections will be more appropriate than others. Although strictly speaking no sound, or group of sounds, is prohibited from following another, this is also the case in language, where our linguistic competence and linguistic intuitions and the articulatory restrictions of the phonemic system limit the possibilities. It might be argued that the axis of choice is

even wider in language, for there are difficulties in accommodating extremes of tonal range and register (including pitch, rhythm and volume), while we are prepared to 'accept' a seeming nonsense sentence such as the opening line of e.e. cummings' poem:

anyone lived in a pretty how town (1960:44)

The disruption here is largely to the vertical axis, for the syntagm as a whole is perfectly coherent with a subject, verb and adverbial (prepositional phrase). The sentence has a syntactic coherence because the phrase groupings are themselves conventional . The disruptions are lexico-grammatical in that 'anyone' cannot be the subject of a past tense verb, and 'how' cannot function as an adjectival modifier. In this sense, any attempt at word-painting would be problematic. The vertical and horizontal relations that function in poetry and music, then, are neither wholly similar nor radically different. Such an observation is important to remember when we come to examine the kind of blend that the two modes produce when combined in song, for they share some features, but not others, and for a blend to occur some functionally similar topographical features must exist. We need therefore to look more closely at the nature of poetry, initially, and the ways in which syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations are mobilised.

The Nature of Poetry and Jakobson's Theory

A poem is a fictional, verbally inventive moral statement in which it is the author, rather than the printer or word-processor, who decides where the lines should end (Eagleton 2007: 25).

As Terry Eagleton, the author of this statement admits, the above is a 'rather dreary-sounding definition', but it may be 'the best we can do'. It makes no reference to what perhaps most people consider to be essential qualities or elements of poetry: rhyme, metre, imagery and other tropes or schemes. But an essentialist view of poetry simply will not do, because as Eagleton goes on to state, there are plenty of poems which have none

of these elements; and much prose that does. We would be better off seeing poetry in terms of Wittgensteinian 'family resemblances' (Wittgenstein, 1961: and elsewhere); that is, there may not be a single feature shared by every poem, but poems are united by links similar to that which family members share. Conversely, poetry can be seen not so much as a collection of elements which may or may not be present, but as a strategy of reading: to read a poem is to read something *as poetry*, imbuing it with meaning and significance that would not be manifest in a different context.

Of all the literary arts, poetry has the longest and most distinguished history. When Plato chose to exclude poets (and therefore poetry) from his Republic, it was because poetry stood as *the* literary genre in which social, political and aesthetic concerns were united. Of all the literary genres, poetry calls attention to itself as poetry in its aesthetic arrangement and form. Prose fiction may look like the discourse of history, or psychology, or sociology, or journalism, but poetry invariably looks like poetry. Despite its compelling oral tradition, its most distinguishing feature, paradoxically, is a visual one. We might further add that what distinguishes poetry from prose are its organisation and the foregrounding of the aesthetic. But this difference is one of degree, not of kind. Prose can also foreground the aesthetic – as in the work of James Joyce and other modernist writers, for example. Further, some poetry (typically postmodern poetry)may not look like poetry in its arrangement of lines, as in the following example from John Yau's poem 'Cenotaph' (1984):

> The clues to what they remembered had been pasted into an album. Photographs of her family and friends, snapshots he had taken during the war. The album was packed neatly in a trunk, which was then stored in the ship's hold (in Hoover, 1994: 573).

The long oral tradition of poetry has in some sense been gradually weakened over time. In Homeric times, poetry was not just read aloud; it was also chanted or sung. There is also a wider issue concerning the development of printing and the relationship between

writing and communication. Marshall McLuhan has pointed out that after the Middle Ages

the development of printing processes brought about a silent reading hitherto unknown.

As a result the eye and speech were separated 'in the act of reading' (1962:83). David

Olson further states that writing 'lifts speech out of its context and turns it into an object of

thought and interpretation' (Olson, 1994: 38). The written word, then, is more an object of

interpretation than is the spoken, and this has important consequences for poetry. Over

time it has become more linguistically dense, partly due to the rise of print culture and

partly due its separation from music. As James Anderson Winn notes in his discussion of

the rise of polyphony:

> It is one of the many ironies...that polyphony, a successful attempt to find a musical
> equivalent for a literary technique, led to a dramatic separation of musical and
> literary technique (1981: 89).

Polyphony enabled music to have vertical and well as horizontal 'events'. Winn argues that

this discovery was the result of the imitation of the literary idea of polysemy:

> In literature, one could claim that a line of poetry had four layers of meaning, but in
> music one could actually write four simultaneous parts (89).

The paradox here is that to set a poem to music is to return the writing to an oral context,

but one that may not enable us to see the poem in the same way, that is as a dense

artefact, a 'verbal icon'.

> Considering the history of lyric poetry, Northrop Frye states:

> We may note that although of course lyrics in all ages are addressed to the ear, the
> rise of fiction and the printing press develops an increasing tendency to address the
> ear through the eye (Frye, 1957: 278).

This is a crucial point, for any modern musical 'setting' of a poem is done so within a

framework not of two fundamentally sonic mediums, but of one sonic (music) and one

whose sound is now primarily 'encountered' through the eye, and 'sounded out' in private

reading. John Dryden acknowledged the tension between the 'readerly' nature of his poetry and the constraints and demands of any musical setting:

> But the Numbers of Poetry and Vocal Musick, are sometimes so contrary, that in many places I have been obliged to cramp my Verses, and make them rugged to the Reader, that they may be harmonious to the Hearer (in Campbell, 1993: 178).

Eagleton's definition of poetry further betrays its modern conception as primarily a textual medium, distinguished by line-endings, rather than, say, breath divisions or sound patterning, although of course these elements may well be important in the poems themselves.

The 'textualisation' of poetry, which began with the invention of the printing presses, developed further in the eighteenth century with the mock epic poems of Pope and Dryden. For Pope the sound of the poem is subservient to its meaning. In 'An Essay on Criticism' he states:

> The *Sound* must seem an *Eccho* to the *Sense* (1963: 155).

Sound here merely assists the semantics of the poem, although it is an assistance that is vital to the life of poetry.

Eagleton's definition ironically highlights a further problem in any attempt to locate poetry's essential features and one that has serious implications for the role of poetry in musical contexts. Jonathan Culler provides a vivid example of how poetic discourse is created by the mere arrangement of lines. Taking a piece of banal journalistic prose, he arranges the words 'like a poem' to demonstrate how tension, ambiguity and poetic effect are manifested:

Hier sur la Nationale sept
Une automobile
Roulant à cent à l'heure s'est jetée
Sur un platane
Ses quatre occupants ont été
Tués.

[Yesterday on the A7 an automobile travelling at sixty miles per hour crashed into a plane tree. Its four occupants were killed] (Culler, 1975: 161).

Culler suggests that in setting the words out in this way , 'poetically', 'brings into play a new set of expectations, a set of conventions determining how the sequence is to be read' (161). Proceeding to analyse the 'poem' in terms of tension and ambiguity, Culler further asserts that it is not any inherent linguistic features that are prompting his reading, but a dispositional belief about the way that words behave in poetry. Although he does not deny the importance of formal elements in poetry prompting a strategy of reading, he suggests that the arrangement of the words on the page can make us read words in a particular way just as compellingly as any rhetorical figure or scheme. He states:

> This is to say that neither the formal patterns nor linguistic deviation of verse suffices it to produce the true structure or state of poetry. The third and crucial factor, which can operate effectively even in the absence of the others, is that of conventional expectation (Culler 1975: 164).

In a musical context, however, certain formal elements, such as the spatial ordering of the text, have to be rendered temporally, for example by way of pauses and cadences. This of course is exactly the same situation if the poem is read aloud – in the sonic medium; and a poem set to music is a kind of *reading* of that poem. But what has happened to the poem, and indeed the very idea of poetry as dense textual artefact? One possibility is that is has become 'mere' language, or prose. Another possibility, not incompatible with the first, is that the music has put back in a different form what it, through the elimination of the spatial and visual aspects of language-as-poetry, had erased from the text. We might say the music imposes a new set of partly formal and partly experiential elements upon the words. Any significance we ascribe to certain words or phrases will be partly determined

by the structure and significance of the music, whether it is the accompaniment to a song or the vocal declamation itself. When sung, the tendency of the sound of poetry to be addressed to the eye, as Frye noted, is in a sense reversed, as we *hear* the words. But what we hear are not the sonic properties of the phonemes themselves, but a transformation of those phonemes into an alternative sonic world. This back and forth movement of the poetic when set in a musical context– its dissolution of poetic properties and overlaying of musical ones – gives rise to conceptual blend of the two forms.

In his broad historical vision of the development of literary modes and genres, Frye is clear about the nature of poetry and its relation to prose. Discussing free verse – that is, poetry without any discernible rhythmic or metrical features – he states:

> The aim of 'free' verse is not simply a revolt against metre and *epos* conventions, but the articulation of an independent rhythm equally distinct from metre and from prose. If we do not recognise this third rhythm, we shall have no answer for the naive objection that when poetry loses its regular metre it becomes prose (Frye, 1957: 273).

The implications of this are such that is therefore fallacious to suggest that poetry requires one kind of 'setting' and prose another, for they are separated by differences of degree, not of kind. Such a view will also account for the fact that certain kinds of prose may sound poetic in a musical context. A good example of this is in Finzi's setting of Thomas Traherne's *Dies Natalis* (1939). The second movement, the 'Rhapsody', is a setting of Traherne's prose, while the latter movements are settings of the poetry. Yet it would be hard to identify the rhapsody as prose, as Finzi's setting gives the words a poetic rhythm which the words themselves would not necessarily display when set out *as* prose as in the following example from Gerald Finzi (1951), the 'Rhapsody', from *Dies Natalis*:

The green trees, when I saw them first, trans port ed and ra vish'd me, their

sweet- ness and un usual beau-ty made my heart to leap, and al most mad with ecstasy

Yet on closer inspection we find that Finzi's setting of Traherne's prose is not so much of an opposition to the poetry as may first be thought, for, as Ann Ridler states, Traherne's prose was the product of 'an instinctive rhythmical sense which he lacked as a poet' (1966: xviii). The absence, however, of any feature that might be considered as belonging purely the domain of poetry is also why Jakobson refers to the 'poetic principle' as something that is not restricted to the genre of poetry but is a feature of language when it 'behaves' poetically. Musical settings can make prose behave in this way, but on the other hand it can appear to rob poetry of some of its distinguishing (though as we have seen, not essential) features. In the above example (as is typically the case) the suprasegmental features at the level of word stress have generally been retained. For example, the word 'sweetness' is naturally stressed on its first syllable.

Certain aspects of poetic form are 'transparent' in that they are discernible even in a musical context. The limerick is the most obvious example here, and is frequently simply (or crudely) set, for example in Victorian comic song, where verses are most naturally set

with musical 'gaps' between them, that is, where between sung passages there are passages of purely instrumental music. However, a composer may of course decide to neglect, or reject any particular poetic aspect, even destroying the natural stress of the words. Forms such as the villanelle, which show set patterns of repeated lines, may be discernible in a musical context; while a longer, more complex form such as the sestina is not so readily perceived[2]. Where there is a thematic rather than visual break, as in the Petrarchan , as opposed to the Shakespearean, sonnet, the composer must acknowledge this through the music in a manner which is not immediately obvious. Indeed, the composer can choose to ignore the 'turn' between the octet and the sestet, although this would be a naive setting unless ironic. A musical setting can bring out the transparent form of the poem or render it opaque.

Poetry makes demands on our senses when read *as* poetry, that also have important implications for its setting in a musical context. Although poetry may differ in degree *linguistically* to other genres it is, according to the Russian semiotician Yuri Lotman, distinguished by its conceptual overloading. At once poetry exploits sound, sense, formal arrangement, rhythm, metre, imagery and tropes, conceptual paradigms and other aspects of cultural and perceptual signification. This is partly why poetry is often referred to as being 'dense' in a way that prose is not; although I have suggested that this is certainly not a sharp division of kind. According to Lotman, each of these aspects acts as a 'semi-autonomous system' (1976: 12) and poetry is thus an expression of the conflict between these various systems. The important question here is whether poetry in a musical context results in a kind of 'semiotic overload' or that somehow the music underwrites one or more

---

[2] A villanelle is a closed poetic form of nineteen lines, with five stanzas of three lines, with a final stanza of four. The first line of the first stanza is repeated as the last line of the second and fourth stanzas. A sestina has thirty-nine lines and six stanzas, without rhyme, The end words of the stanzas are repeated throughout in a fixed pattern.

of these semi-autonomous systems therefore reducing the tension and therefore in some way reducing its 'poeticalness' by suggesting tonal analogues for its semantics. In either case a conceptual blend which uniquely draws on the properties of both aesthetic forms is manifest.

A significant theory that has bearing on the concepts of syntagmatic (horizontal) and paradigmatic (vertical) axes, drawing on the work of Saussure, is that proposed by Jakobson. In his 1960 paper, 'Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics' he put forward his influential 'poetic principle'. Poetry, Jakobson asserts, 'projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination' (1960:358). This short, pithy statement has important implications not only for the study of poetry but also of music. It is essentially formalist and descriptive, but it also suggests a way of reading poetry that can be interpreted within a cognitive linguistics framework, that is, with a focus on how we as interpreters understand and make sense of a work. Let us take a short example from the poetry of William Blake (a poet frequently set by composers), and discussed by the linguist Roger Fowler (1986: 78) in his analysis of Jakobsonian theory:

Marks of weakness, marks of woe (Blake, 1958: 52)

In this line from 'London' (1794) we have a syntagm naturally made up of a number of lexical and grammatical items. The patterned nature of the writing enables us to make connexions which shift from the phonological to the lexical to the grammatical and syntactic – something not exclusive to poetry but to highly patterned language in general. The lexical items 'weakness'' and 'woe' occur in similar syntactic positions at the end of their separate phrasal contexts. Because of this parallelism, the terms form a paradigm which is then paradoxically made syntagmatic. The phonological patterning of the repeated *w* enforces this relation, even though the number of following phonemes is different in each phrase. Thus 'weakness' and 'woe' can be said to be part of a lexical set

showing a vertical relationship, which is distributed across the syntagm ('projected'

according to Jakobson). In some ways the semantic aspect is not as important as the

phonological and syntactic: the arrangement suggests a link where we might not normally

expect one. If the line read, for example:

Marks of weakness, marks of water

we would still construe 'weakness' and 'water' in some way as equivalent, even though

they do not normally collocate. The parallelism of the poetry is enough to force the

connexion, projecting from the vertical to the horizontal axis.

It is important to remember that Jakobson calls this the poetic 'principle' and in

doing so does not confine its activity to the phenomenon of poetry alone. Other kinds of

linguistic ordering, such as advertising slogans may also display this principle. However,

Jakobson's theory hints at possible ways of reading poetry, and there is a crucial difference

between such reading and the reading and hearing of music. Although oral poetry has a

long history, Romantic and post-Romantic lyric poetry, primarily condensed and textual,

has dominated for at least two centuries. Such poetry is characterised by dense linguistic

features, overt parallelism and patterning and the exhibiting of a series of complex

grammatical and lexical relationships. Poetry is seen as the most 'difficult' of the literary

arts, and the most dense. To fully grasp the poem we must read and re-read. It is a 'well-

wrought urn' (Cleanth Brooks, 1947) or 'verbal icon' (Wimsatt and Beardsley, 1954) and will

not give up its secrets lightly. Despite Jakobson's idea that lexical connexions are laid out

for us by the vertical displacement of elements we must work hard as readers to fully

register and understand those connexions. Indeed, as I have suggested it appears that

poetry itself is the linguistic art whereby vertical connexions are paramount: we do not

read a lyric poem in the same way as we do a narrative. This makes sense in that much

lyric poetry, as noted, is an epiphanic distillation of a moment, not a linear story being told. Although this is a generalisation about poetry it is nevertheless one that to a certain extent can be sustained. Keats's'Ode 'On a Grecian Urn' is perhaps the ultimate statement on the iconicity and 'well-wroughtedness' of poetry, as the poem itself strives to be what is described *in* the poem:

> Thou still unravished bride of quietness,
> Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,
> Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
> A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
> What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape
> Of deities or mortals, or of both,
> In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
> (Keats, 1970: 208)

Here is the lyric essence; the contemplation of a moment or object in time, the intimate and yet unspecified address, the rhetorical questioning, the lack of narrative focus or drive. The poem is as still as the urn it celebrates.

As Stephen Banfield notes, many English songs have the character of lyric poems, essentially 'inward-looking, private and intimate' (Banfield 1985: x). If the music merely recreates the poem in a different mode, it will not only be without tensions, as Banfield further notes, it will be without direction (11). Yet, there is also a fundamental difficulty in accommodating opposing forces or moods in poetry.

The differences between the experience of poetry and the experience of music can be accounted for by a consideration of their typical modes. Poetry is *typically* a mode experienced as a solitary and private activity, and this has come about, as Frye noted, through the development of printing and the consequent textualisation of that mode. Our experience of poetry is largely through private *reading* despite the oral tradition and the continued function of public poetry readings. In contrast, our experience of music is primarily through *hearing*, although in earlier periods through reading a score and playing.

Thus music is prototypically a temporal art, poetry a spatial one. When poetry is sung, it is taken out of the private sphere of reading, to the public arena of declamation. However, Steven Paul Scher puts forward quite a different view:

> Both literature and music are temporal art forms and thus share an intrinsic aesthetic impulse to be comprehended in space (1970, in Bernhart and Wolf, 2004: 33)

It is not clear why literature is cast as a temporal art form; nor is it clear why both forms tend to be 'comprehended in space'. Literature, it is assumed, is experienced through the mental act of reading and the apprehension of the physical being of the text. The temporality resides in the act of reading, but that does not make it a temporal art form as such. Indeed, if that were the case then there would be significantly fewer problems regarding the relationship between the two. It is true that the temporality of music is often, perhaps overwhelmingly, rendered spatially (through metaphor ,see Kivvy and Scruton, and elsewhere) but this is a separate issue. Scher continues:

> Effective attempts to express literature in the medium of music generally accomplish a quasi-visual representation of 'literary' space within the temporal confines of music (cf. the phenomenon of program music) (33).

The crucial context for the hearing of poetry is, of course, in *song*. A song that features densely textual poetry can be seen in a number of different ways. For Suzanne Langer music overwhelms the words. She states:

> Song is not a compromise between poetry and music, though the text taken by itself be a great poem; song is music (1953:152).

For Langer it is the music that is the primary vehicle of whatever communication or expression is made. Similarly, others such as W.H. Auden have gone as far as to doubt that we have any experience of poetry at all in song or other musical settings, but we are merely responding to a succession of sung syllables (Auden, in Sail, 2005: 44). Similarly, Michael Tippett states that as soon as composer begins to create the musical verses of a song' he

destroys our appreciation of the poem as poetry, and substitutes an appreciation of his music as song' (1960:462). If this is the case then song is neither a conceptual blend nor a semiotic overload, but a simple musical experience with the addition of human voice. Further, the poetry would then merely be the impulse for the composition, having no real cognitive function when experienced aurally. If we conceive of poetry as essentially aural (and oral) experience, the similarities between it and music are made manifest. Although, as I have suggested, poetry is typically encountered in its graphic form, it has a persuasive ontology that encourages theorists such as Scruton and Kivvy, to see it as a phonic experience. Scruton states:

> So what distinguishes the sound of music?
> The simple answer is 'organisation'. But it is no answer at all if we cannot say what kind of organisation we have in mind. Poetry too is organised sound: sound organised thrice over, first by the rules of syntax and semantics, secondly by the aesthetic intention of the poet, and thirdly by the reader or listener, as he recuperates the images and thoughts and holds them in suspension (1997: 16).

We might say, of course, that all language is organised sound, the difference in poetry, or rather the 'poetic function, being the aesthetic layer, which poetry exploits[3]. We also hold musical ideas 'in suspension' typically until a phrase has been completed, and we group the musical sounds we hear into 'chunks' of tones just as we do with language. It does not matter at this stage if we cannot define 'musical organisation'; what matters here is that there are fundamental similarities between poetry and music. Their unity in song presents a new series of problems and issues. Before attempting to match up the particularities of English poetic form and rhythm with any musical setting we must consider the fundamental traits of English prosody, and what precisely is meant by the phrase 'the music of poetry'.

---

[3] In his discussion of the relationship between language and music, Leonard Bernstein in *The Unanswered Question* (1976)calls this aesthetic aspect the 'super surface structure'.

Chapter Two:
The Music of Poetry and the Poetry of Music

Prosody of English

Many of the issues to do with the relationship between poetry and music are what might

be called cross-linguistic in that they are concerned with the functioning of a linguistic

phenomenon in any language in the context of a musical one. However, there are

important aspects to be noted about the nature of individual languages and their potential

embedding in music. English, in particular has been often described as a language unsuited

to musical settings. As Steven Varcoe states:

> English is thought to be a difficult language to sing, and this is an opinion held by
> most English-speaking singers. Far better the simpler sounds of Italian, they say,
> than the messy complications of dipthong, neutral vowel and clipped consonant
> which so get in the way of good tone (2000:10).

The structure and articulation of English are going to be felt not only in the potential for

musical settings, but also in the very make-up of the poems set. Indeed, recent research

has shown that the stress patterns of a language influence musical style. This might not be

surprising if one is talking about text-setting, but it appears that there is also some

influence on the composition of instrumental music. Patel (2008) among others, has

shown that due to factors such as 'vowel reduction', English has a relatively high degree of

syllable-to-syllable variability in length, compared to, say, the French language, which is

much more even in its syllabic distribution. This variability in English goes some way to

accounting for the 'syllable for note' equivalence so dominant in the early part of the

twentieth century, most evident in the work of composers such as Finzi and Gurney,

although it must be said that French song is also traditionally syllabic. Though in the

relatively early stages, the research has already suggested that English and French music,

for example differ in rhythmic variability and manner in ways similar to that of the different languages. Stress, rhythm and metre are, of course, fundamental in any musical setting. A poem (in a musical context)is a linguistic site comprising the stress patterns of the language's words, together with the suprasegmental intonation patterns of larger units, together with the metre of the poetry itself.

The classical approach to English metre – still being taught in schools and colleges today – is, as Derek Attridge explains, one that 'takes as its fundamental unit the *foot*, a group of syllables each of which is defined as *stressed* or *unstressed*' (1982: 6). English metres thus typically contain a fixed number of repetitions of the same foot, as in the following opening line of Shakespeare's sonnet 29, which is in iambic pentameter:

When in disgrace and fortune with men's eyes (1980: 1313)

Even in ordinary speech foot types tend to recur, as English is not expressed in long successions of either stressed or unstressed syllables: they tend to alternate. But of course even poetic language is not metred so strictly as the example above already shows. Our instinct is to stress the word 'when' rather than the grammatical word (a preposition) 'in'. In order to accommodate this kind of variation the classical model uses the term 'substitution' – where one foot is substituted for another within a line. The classical prosodist, therefore, will be able to say that the first *iamb* on 'When in' has been substituted for a *trochaic* 'Whén in'. This approach tries to account not only for the natural rhythms and stresses of English, but also to accommodate the drama of the poetry where stresses can operate for rhetorical effect.

Every word in English will have its own stress pattern, and each word will combine with others in discourse to form the rhythmic inflections of the language. Stresses will tend to fall on the elements carrying lexical meaning; if they fall on grammatical elements it is

for emphasis or effect. The stressing of accent on a grammatical element is 'marked' in English discourse. For example, in the sentence,

The man was walking quickly

the 'default' reading would be as that it is essentially iambic, the iamb being the most common foot in English. If the stress is on the article, 'The ', it feels marked (a trochee followed by an iamb). Marking of this kind may be evident depending on the context of the utterance. Of course we do not speak with any consciousness of this. As Attridge rightly states, prosodic feet do not have any real significance for the reader, or the hearer, for that matter, unless they are made evident.

The line from Shakespeare quoted above shows us that in introducing the notion of substitution, the classical prosodists were trying to accommodate two potentially opposing factors. Any poetic rhythm must be, in a sense, manufactured, or artificial (making words fit the Alexandrine line, for instance), but it also must draw in some way on the natural rhythms and stresses of the language. As Attridge explains, following a description of the classical model:

> What I have described is merely a mode of scansion: a simple underlying metre on which is superimposed a more complex pattern representing with greater fidelity the actual pronunciation of the words. Most modern defenders of the classical approach would argue that this picture of two levels, partly coinciding, partly conflicting, reflects what in fact happens when we read metrical verse, and reveals one source of its special character (1982:9).

When metrical verse is set in song, the relation between natural stresses and metrical patterning is figured within a third sonic context, that of the music. Relations then exist between the natural stresses of the words and the rhythm and shape of the music, and between the metrical shape of the verse and the music. However, the idea of two interrelated levels can easily be applied to music – or at least analogues between the two modes can be suggested. Gerard Manley Hopkins uses the term 'counterpoint' for this

relation – suggesting that this kind of double-structure in poetry is analogous to musical counterpoint, particularly when only two voices are interweaving (Hopkins, in Gardner, 1968: 7). Plausible though this may initially seem, the idea is flawed because such an interrelationship of levels is not made purposely manifest as in the case of counterpoint) and may not be discerned by the hearer or reader at all. A clearer conception of the relation between music and poetry is suggested by Yonatan Malin who, drawing on the work of Hans Georg Nägeli, acknowledges not only that speech, poetry and music have independent rhythms, but also that these come together in song (in this case the Lied) to produce a 'higher artistic whole' (2010:30). This notion of a new kind of perceptual and artistic creation coming into being through the interrelationship of poetry in music is expressed in the theory of conceptual blending, discussed in Chapter Three.

One of the difficulties with this classical model of prosody is that almost any variation in the metre, or indeed any interpretation of the metre, can be accounted for in terms of substitution; and this renders the idea of repeated patterns of feet with an underlying natural stress somewhat insecure. As Attridge further states, readers of verse are 'not conscious of any underlying, abstract non-stress in conflict with the actual stress ... nor of any notional stress challenging the unstressed' (13). Tension is located not between two conflicting/coinciding levels, but 'in the linear progression of the line' (13), bringing us once more to Jakobson's poetic principle. If this is the case, then any tension in a line of poetry can be accommodated by a musical line. The problem of music accommodating the two levels of verse stress disappears, but another problem appears. When a poem is sung, its rhythmical and metrical organisation is taken over by the music. The natural rhythm and stress of words must be preserved at the expense of metrical accents, but what happens here is that the tension that exists between the 'natural' stresses of words and their behaviour and stresses in a metrical context is altered.

The 'Musicality' of Poetry

It is commonplace to talk about the 'musicality' of a poem, as if it were a given feature of 'true' (and perhaps all) poetry. It is sometimes also assumed that one of the problems of setting a poem to music is that the poem itself is already musical in some way and that the combination of musics produces, once again, a kind of clash or receptive overload. As Scher has pointed out, the use of the terms 'music' and 'musicality' when applied to poetry is inconsistent, theoretically flimsy and often downright misleading (1972: 38). Poetry, it is often asserted, has its own music, being the one literary genre where sound and patterning are foregrounded over sense and reference. Such musicality is more or less emphasised depending on the aesthetics of the era in question. Taking a much broader historical view, C.M. Bowra states that in its beginning poetry is 'intimately welded with music' (in Winn, 1981: 1). The modernists used the notion of the musicality of poetry as more than just a metaphor for poetic practice. The modernist poet Ezra Pound asks the poet to hear the line as 'a musical phrase' and states that poetry 'withers and 'dries out' when it leaves music, or at least an imagined music, too far behind it' (1954: 437). The Symbolist poet Mallarmé wrote that poets should 'reclaim from music what is rightfully theirs'(in Scher, 1972: 39). Similarly, as Fréderiqué Arroyas states:

> Because language's intrinsic aural and rhythmic qualities are very often overlooked, reading a text where sound takes precedence as a mode of expression often sensitises readers to a text's 'musicality'. It is in Symbolist poetry that this link was most obviously cultivated.' (2001: 83)

And yet it is not clear where this 'musicality' resides. It is not necessarily melody, or mellifluousness. In 'The Music of Poetry' (1942), T.S. Eliot's argument is rather circular:

> My purpose here is to insist that a 'musical poem' is a poem which has a musical pattern of sound and a musical pattern of the secondary meanings of the words which compose it, and that these two patterns are indissoluble and one (1975[1942]: 113).

Such a definition is ultimately tautologous, suggesting only that a musical poem is 'musical'. Later in the same essay he further suggests that 'the properties in which music concerns the poet most nearly, are the sense of rhythm and the sense of structure' (1975: 113). But this does not help us, for 'structure' is hardly defined and the 'sense of structure' is something that could be applied to many art forms. Further, rhythm is that most basic but nevertheless non-essential element of music. It is clear that Eliot's ideas about the similarities between poetry and music are not based on dense and fruitful analogies, but on loose and vague metaphors.

Others, such as Eliot's contemporary Pound, see the musicality of a poem as being beyond such evident aspects as rhythm and structure. For Pound, poetry is 'a *composition of words set to music*'(in Eliot, 1954: 457, my emphasis) and he further describes the term *melopoeia*,[4] 'wherein the words are charged over and above their plain meaning, with some musical property, which directs the bearing or trend of that meaning' (25). Pound's focus here seems to be on the semantic properties of poetry. As I have suggested, however, words by their simple occurrence in a poem tend to become 'charged over and above their plain meaning' and Pound's speculation about the 'musical property' of such words takes us no further than Eliot's vague word-painting.

Scher ultimately rejects the application of the term 'musical' to poetry, stating, 'I propose that in the place of "musicality" or "musical" in the sentimental, impressionistic sense, we simply refer to the *acoustic* or phonetic quality of poetry or prose' (1972: 45). Following Northrop Frye (1957) he concludes that euphoniousness in itself does not equate with 'musicality and that 'sheer beauty of sound is often the sign of an unmusical poet' (43). From a cognitive perspective, Fred Lerdahl sees the processing of musical and poetic

---

[4] As noted, the term *melopoeia* is currently used in conjunction with a growing body of work on the relationship between literature and music.

stress and rhythm as 'formally and cognitively equivalent … A poetic or musical meter exists when the perceiver infers conceptually regular levels of beats from the signal' (2001: 341). This does not imply, however, either that music is poetical or poetry musical, only that similar cognitive processes are at work. Having rejected the notion of the musicality of a poem in favour of focussing on its acoustic properties, and having explored the vertical and horizontal relations of music it is clear that music and poetry are neither separated nor conjoined by linearity, temporality or musicality as are traditionally conceived.

The English Lyric Poem

Lyric poetry is traditionally distinguished from *narrative*, or epic, poetry. According to Northrop Frye:

> The lyric is the genre in which the poet, like the ironic writer, turns his back on his audience. It is also the genre which most clearly shows the hypothetical core of literature, narrative and meaning in their literal aspects of word-order and word-pattern (1957: 271).

The lyric, then, is essentially private and meditative, and we as readers (or hearers) are privy to the internal world of the poetic *persona*. Our experience of the poem on the printed page intimates that which is 'overseen as well as overheard' (274).

The great majority of poems set by early and mid-twentieth century English composers have been what could be described as Romantic, even if those poems fall outside of what is traditionally conceived of as the Romantic era (roughly, the late eighteenth to the late nineteenth century). The Georgian poets, set particularly by composers such as Gurney and Finzi, though they reject dream-like setting and myth, share with the Romantics a sense both of lived experience and of communion with nature. We can discern two main trends in English poetical thought and practice since the Renaissance. The first line, or tradition, runs from Shakespeare and Milton, through to the Romantics,

notably Wordsworth and Blake, to Swinburne, Hardy and Yeats – and from then on to Larkin and Heaney. The second line runs from John Donne and the metaphysical poets to Dryden and Pope, and then to Browning and Eliot. This is a useful generalisation in that it sets up points of comparison and distinction, although of course, the boundaries between the two 'traditions' are blurred. The Romantic tradition is characterised by reference to and love of, nature and the focus on individual experience and revelatory moments captured linguistically (Wordsworth's 'spots of time'). This is the tradition of largely rural, pastoral poetry. The second tradition is characterised by multiple voices, dramatic moods and the adoption of (often ironic) *personae*. It is fundamentally urban in outlook and has its base in eighteenth century sensibility. Two examples here should suffice to show the crucial differences. The first is from Wordsworth's Ode: 'Intimations of Immortality', 1804:

> 1. There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
>   The earth, and every common sight,
>   To me did seem
>   Apparelled in celestial light,
>   The glory and freshness of a dream.
>   (Wordsworth, 1969: 460)

The second is from T.S. Eliot's "Preludes", 1917:

> 2. The morning comes to consciousness
>   Of faint stale smells of beer
>   From the sawdust-trampled street
>   With all its muddy feet that press
>   To early coffee stands.
>   (Eliot, 1975: 23)

English art song draws most heavily on this first tradition – and sometimes not from its best representatives. There are reasons for this which have important implications for the relationship between lyric poetry and musical contexts. The general impulse particularly in English art songs of the early to mid-twentieth century is for the setting of Romantic poetry, though not of course confined to those nineteenth century poets commonly known as the 'Romantics', with a syllabic approach, making both the notation

regular and the poetry quantity-based. In poetry of this kind, despite other manifest complexities, the voice tends to be monologic (single-voiced) and coherent; essentially chronicling single, individual, deeply-felt experience. This is entirely appropriate for a musical language which is tonal, with a generally agreed, traditional syntax. Both the individual 'I-sayer' of the poem and the musical language which he or she is declaiming through, are recognisable – as empirical events. There may be significant tensions relating to the frailty of the 'I', but in general we expect a coherent personality to emerge. Often, however, we encounter a dark underside to the poem (one that may elude or confound the composer):

> So little cause for carolings
> Of such ecstatic sound
> Was written on terrestrial things
> Afar or nigh around,
> That I could think there trembled through
> His happy good-night air
> Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
> And I was unaware.
> (Hardy, 1976: 119)

Thomas Hardy's poem of 31st December 1900 seems at first to suggest an optimistic view of a prevailing doom. Yet it is the final confession of being unaware of such joy that makes its ultimate statement one of doubt and even despair, thus running counter to the surface suggestion that the 'aged thrush's' song is a harbinger of hope. The problem for the composer is that any realisation of this contradictory reading must not be rendered crudely. However, the 'I' experiencing this dark epiphany is a wholly coherent 'I who is observing and recording that observation and experience. The 'dark underside' is a result of the disjunction between what the 'I' experiences and what he feels.

English Song and the Problem of Irony

In his Crees lectures of1954 Gerald Finzi states that 'native song grows out of native language' (2009: 10); but it is important to remember that even as late as the early twentieth century the poetry and literature of English were considered by many to be suitable only as a way of educating and civilising the lower middle classes (Eagleton, 1983:24). The idea of studying literature in the vernacular – as opposed to Latin, Greek and possibly German was a relatively new idea; and F.R. Leavis had not yet founded the 'Great Tradition' of English Literature. As Finzi intimates, Housman's extraordinary impact on songwriters in the early twentieth century may have been linked to a general reaction against the 'Teutonic hegemony'. But it was, it seems, also a discovery of the qualities of the newly emerging vernacular literature, coinciding with the so-called renaissance in musical thought and practice. That the new music had somehow to reconcile itself to the new literature, or at least the idea of English literature, is nicely demonstrated by the fact that in his early career Hubert Parry set four Shakespeare sonnets – in German translation. As Finzi once again states, composers such as Parry and Stanford 'came into an environment which made it almost impossible to accept English as a language fit for music' (2009: 15).

In his discussion of the German Lied, Scher reminds us that it is primarily a musical event but one that expresses 'creative tension' between [the Lied's]verbal and musical components' (1999]: 285). Lawrence Kramer extends this notion to art song in general:

> the primary fact about song is what might be called a topological distortion of utterance under the rhythmic and harmonic stress of music: a pulling, stretching, and twisting that deforms the current of speech without negating its basic linguistic shape. The art song as a genre is the exploitation of this expressive typology – its shaping both as a primary musical experience and as a reflection of the contest between musical and poetic meanings (Kramer, 1984: 130).

Far from being an imaginative blend, song for Kramer is a site of contestation and struggle.

The German Lied developed to such an extent in the early nineteenth century that with Beethoven, Schumann and Schubert 'the poem itself, however memorable as great poetry, pales in comparison' to the musical form and mood (Scher 1999: 293). In Victorian England, however, there was no equivalent to the Lied or indeed anything approaching serious art song, the era being notable for the drawing-room ballad and popular song (Russell, 1997: 105). It was from this relatively barren musical landscape that English song somehow emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Finzi provides a good example of English song writing in the first half of the twentieth century, although he is not wholly representative. His musical language, as many commentators have noted (for example, Banfield, 1985; Hold, 2002;McVeagh, 2005) was somewhat conservative; but he had an acute, sensitive and detailed knowledge of English poetry, and set a wide range of poets, including many contemporaries. Perhaps his finest work is *Dies Natalis* (given in an earlier example), a setting of both the prose and poetry of the sixteenth century poet Thomas Traherne. For Finzi it is clear that the impulse to set a particular poem comes in the first place from a love of the poetry and the desire to place it in a musical context (McVeagh, 2005, *and elsewhere*). On the issue of the language of music he states:

> Verbal language and musical language are closely paralleled; both use symbols and both are subject to changing idioms, and though music cannot express concrete images, it expresses generalised emotions, which are understood and felt by those who understand its language (Finzi, 2011: 15).

This is a remarkable statement from Finzi, anticipating, albeit in somewhat untheorised manner, the sense of the combined semiosis of music and language and the analogous Chomskyan concept of language intuition. But it also echoes the familiar idea of music as a 'language of the emotions', suggested by its inability to express 'concrete images'. For Finzi, poetry is naturally set to music, and does not require words especially written to be placed in a musical context:

> In almost every generation the argument is put forward that certain words, complete in themselves, need no music, and that the composer should confine himself to words intended to be set. This is rarely put forward by composers themselves (2010: 9).

However, although Finzi set a very wide range of poets, he tended to focus on the Georgian contemporaries, the Romantics, and Hardy. Read simply, these poets are very settable, but they often have that darker underlay of meaning that is not recognised by all of those who have set their works to music. This is even the case with A.E. Housman, whose poetry was set by more composers than any other poet in the early twentieth century. Formally, this is not surprising, as the poems in *A Shropshire Lad* (1896) are on the whole regular, metrical, rhyming and bucolic. Finzi states:

> Again, it is likely ... that poems too tightly packed with intellectual concepts are unsuitable. Their meaning demands thought of clarification which is not possible in the flow-past of the music (2010: 11).

Here again Finzi touches on an important issue. Although it is not clear what an 'intellectual concept' is, there is a recognition that different kinds of poetry demand a level of attention that cannot easily be addressed by music. I would say that this is not so much about the intellectual content of a poem than about our experience of poetry in general, related to the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes. Poetry demands attention not so much because of the density of its ideas, although of course it can have dense ideas, but because of its linguistic density. This linguistic density is not to be equated with syntactic complexity or lexical pyrotechnics: it is a density of paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations. Lotman's idea of a kind of 'semiotic overload' can in part be accounted for by the potential richness of associative (vertical) relations in conjunction with horizontal (syntagmatic) relations that are foregrounded by virtue of poetry's aesthetic texture. Such topographical interconnectedness is important, as we shall see, in the characterisation of song as a 'conceptual blend'. The richness and density of these relations can be seen in the following extract from W.H. Auden's poem 'The Quest' (1940):

Out of it steps the future of the poor,
Enigmas, executioners and rules,
Her majesty in a bad temper or
The red-nosed Fool who makes a fool of fools.

Great persons eye it in the twilight for
A past it might so carelessly let in,
A widow with a missionary grin,
The foaming inundation at a roar.
(Auden, 1979: 99)

Here, there is little in terms of narrative for the poem is characterised by the use of the present tense as a kind of 'continuous' present and extended noun phrases ('A past it might so carelessly let in'). The rhyme scheme of the first stanza (*abab*) is inverted in the second (*abba*), destabilising our sense of syntagmatic expectancy, while vertical relations between the rhyming words set up oppositions between the great and high, and the poor and low. Vertical lexical connexions are made between the various persons that inhabit the poem: the widow, the Fool, Her Majesty, executioners, the poor, and these are projected onto the syntagmatic axis. The lyric voice is distant and ironic.

The British composer first to break away from the note-for-syllable, largely pastoral and Romantic approach to song was Benjamin Britten. Not only did he set such complex and ironic poets such as Auden, he also brought back to English song something alien to the songwriters of the first quarter of the century: melismatic writing. He states:

> One of my chief aims is to try and restore to the musical setting of the English Language brilliance, freedom and vitality that have been curiously rare since the days of Purcell. In the past hundred years, English writing for the voice has been dominated by strict subservience to logical speech rhythms, despite the fact that accentuation according to sense often contradicts the accentuation demanded by emotional content (Britten in Finzi, 2011: 11).

The heirs of Britten's approach to song – composers such as Hugh Wood, Robin Holloway and Judith Weir continued to experiment with dramatic and melismatic writing, but the tradition of English song has not been developed significantly since then. In 2009 NMC released a recording of songs commissioned from over one hundred British composers. In

the accompanying booklet Bayan Northcott states that 'it would be idle to pretend that

lyric song-writing has remained a central concern of composers since the death of Britten'

(Northcott, 2009: 13). In commissioning the songs there were a number of constraints:

each song should be no more than three minutes duration, preferably should reflect some

aspect of British life, and set English text. Another important though unstated constraint

was on the setting of poets from the last seventy years: because of copyright issues few

composers chose to set comparatively recent poems. Despite these constraints the choices

of the composers are revealing, showing not only an enduring predilection for certain poets

but also suggesting something about the nature of word-setting. The familiar figures are

there, with Blake as the most represented with five composers setting his works. Hardy,

Edward Thomas and John Clare also feature with multiple settings, while the poet so

beloved of the early twentieth century composers, A.E. Housman, has only one setting. In

terms of poets alone the collection would suggest very little movement from the early

twentieth century. Copyright issues notwithstanding, there is no especial reason why these

poets have been set. Britten showed that dense, ironic and witty poetry such as W.H.

Auden's could be set, but, in this collection the English semi-pastoral prevails, with the

Augustan eighteenth century almost completely neglected: there is tellingly no Pope or

Dryden. This is presumably because the eighteenth century was the great age of irony and

satire: tropes much more difficult to capture in music.

The most prolifically set poet in the twentieth century is A.E. Housman. Bill Lewis's

catalogue lists 500 settings of the poet's work; and although he is hardly set with the same

enthusiasm and regularity as was the case in the first half of the twentieth century, he

nevertheless still appeals, as Anthony Powers' 2009 composition 'Shining Plain' from *A

Shropshire Lad* (1896) testifies. Apart from the curiosity of the sheer number of settings,

Housman's poetry is interesting because it precisely shows up the difficulties and issues

associated with the attempt (or not) to reflect, encode or otherwise capture the 'dark underside' of the lyric impulse. Housman's poetry has been set by composers because of its simplicity, metrical regularity, evocativeness and 'musicality' (Banfield, 1985 and *elsewhere*), yet two of these impulses – metrical regularity and musicality would seem to militate against anything other than a crude or superficial rendering of the poet's words. Despairing, at times, of composers' often crude approach to Housman' s poetry, Stephen Banfield states:

> This is not to say that it is impossible to set Housman to music satisfactorily, but that many of the composers have been led astray by the very musical qualities of Housman's verse and its settability: the simple, flowing metre with little *enjambment,* the infallible scansion and rhyme, and the largely monosyllabic vocabulary, which ease the path so completely for the composer that they can ultimately prove more of a hindrance than a help, because they were never intended as a gift to composers but as a swift and smooth vehicle for Housman's own apophthegms (Banfield, 1985: 243).

Here again is the familiar appeal to the 'musicality' of the poems. Yet in the light of the earlier discussion it should be clear that no such musicality is evident. Housman's 'musicality' in this case, is not a quality that the poetry possesses in the sense of 'sounding like music' but tautologously the quality of being readily set to music, but not because of any inherent 'musicality. The poetry is thus readily set because of 'monosyllabic vocabulary' and 'flowing metre', neither of which are anything more than tenuously linked with music (indeed, the phrase 'monosyllabic vocabulary' does not point to music in even a metaphorical way). For others, the poems' settability belies their complexity. As the composer Ian Venables says of the poems:

> But while seemingly easy to set, there is also a trap lying in wait – one that in my opinion many composers, both past and present, have fallen into. What appears at first glance to be an uncomplicated set of words, are in fact, quite the opposite. Their simple strophic form belies an internal structure of great complexity. Housman's powerful poetic images and subtle metaphors convey many different levels of meaning (Venables, 2007).

It is not clear what 'an internal structure' might be, and we need to investigate further whether the poems convey 'many different levels of meaning', before we can then assess the ways in which music might accommodate these levels. In order for such an analysis to proceed there needs to be a bringing together of the assumptions made about the relationship between poetry and music, which must be examined and tested against a broad theory of how we process and make sense of the phenomenon of English song. Such a theory is to be found in cognitive science: that of conceptual blending.

Chapter Three:
Songs, Settings and Blended Spaces

Semantics and Syntax of Music

A detailed consideration of the relationship between words, or language in general, and music is beyond the scope of this dissertation. The literature in this area is vast and a number of key theorists have attempted to draw extremely close analogies between the two systems, the linguistic and the musical. One broad way is to draw on the work of Saussure, once more, and see both as semiotic systems – that is, finite, iterable signifying systems that both have a semantic and syntactic content. The idea of music being a semiotic system similar to language is explored in the works of Ruwet (1972) and Nattiez (1975), influenced by the French theorist Roland Barthes. Theorists influenced by the linguist Noam Chomsky see music as possessing a generative 'grammar' similar to that of language. This theory is most fully developed in the work of Lerdahl and Jackendoff (1983). Language and music are similar in that they both have aural and graphic forms, and their *proto*typical forms are aural. That is to say that prototypical language is spoken language, and prototypical music is music that is heard or played. Both of the graphic forms are in a sense subsidiary, at least in the sense that they evolved later and are not primary forms (*contra* Derrida). Because of these clearly shared characteristics, it is tempting to pursue the linguistic analogy further and to suggest that music is like language (few have suggested that language is like music, but see Lidov, 2005) in two crucial ways as noted above: that they both have a syntax and a semantics. However, as Downing Thomas notes 'official discourse on music in the twentieth century has largely resisted discussion of music as it might be related to language and meaning' (Thomas, 1995: 12).

There are a handful of exceptions to this but in general despite the potential unifying link of semiosis, linguists and semioticians have largely rejected the idea of music being functionally akin to language. Benveniste, for example rejects the idea that music is a sign-system comparable with language because musical pitches have no meaning that can be specified in language, except in a vague or metaphorical way. A red traffic light, in the system of traffic signalling, can be specified by the linguistic item *stop*. In this sense, it *means* 'stop'. A chord, for example, can only be named (C major seventh) or described in an impressionist way ('mellow') but its 'meaning' cannot be specified. Its signification is acquired only in a particular context. Further, music does not seem to evince the binary qualities that were so important to Saussure's description of language. The pitch-value system is not binary and contrastive in the way that, say, the phoneme system is. As an example, the English phonemes *v* and *f* are related in that they are articulated at the same place and at the same manner (they are labio-dental affricatives). However, the relationship is contrastive in that one is voiced (*v*) and the other voiceless (*f*). There does not seem to be a similar system at work in music, where a pitch, say is in a paired but contrastive relation with any other pitch. Such differences are only of concern if one is looking for a relatively complete symmetry of the two systems. In terms of conceptual blending, there are enough crucial similarities– and perhaps more important, crucial differences, for the relationship to be significant; as it is in terms of horizontal and vertical relations.

Ideas about the nature of musical meaning have ranged in the twentieth century from discussions of the general nature of such meaning in aesthetic and social contexts (Meyer, 1956) to attempts to construct a musical vocabulary , or taxonomy of meaning (Cooke, 1959) and to conceiving of it entirely in grammatical or syntactic terms (Lerdahl and Jackendoff, 1983). Cooke's work is most pertinent and relevant to this discussion. In describing the 'language of music' Cooke wishes to show that:

> the conception of music as a language capable of expressing certain very definite things is not a romantic aberration, but has been the common unconscious assumption of composers for the past five-and-a-half centuries at least (1959: xi).

In doing so he attempts an ambitious project:

> to isolate the various means of expression available to the composer – the various procedures in the dimensions of pitch, time, and volume – and to discover what emotional effects these procedures can produce; but more specifically ... to pinpoint the inherent emotional characters of the various notes of the major, minor, and chromatic scales, and of certain basic melodic patterns which have been used persistently throughout our musical history (Cooke 1959: xii).

Much of this has potential implications for the study of the relationship between poetry and music, for what Cooke is proposing is essentially a musical semantics, a semantics linked with emotional states. But Cooke also seems to be suggesting that, in Fregean terms,[5] music is not only capable of *sense* but also of *reference* – that is, it can 'express certain very definite things'(xii). This is a bold claim and one that suggests that the language of music is much more like a natural language than most have been prepared to accept. The traditional view is that language is concrete and capable of referring to specific things, while music is vague and abstract and *incapable of referring*. If, however, music is seen to have a fully-blown semantics of its own and is capable of definite reference, its relationship with words in song, for instance, is likely to be extremely complex, and begs the question whether that semantic network is at odds or congruent with the semantic network of natural language.

Cooke tends to try to reinforce his argument by exploiting something that ultimately undermines it, for he constantly has recourse to examples from vocal music – as these examples, being in the more concrete medium of language, would vindicate his readings of the musical works through more specific reference. However, they often give

---

[5] The German mathematician and philosopher Gottlob Frege (1848-1925), often considered to be the father of modern philosophy of language.

the impression that the words themselves are already guiding his interpretation.

Comparing music and literature he states:

> A piece of music is made up of aggregations of notes, just as a poem is made up of aggregations of words. And here the analogy with literature breaks down completely in one sense since there is no connection between the intellectual-emotional organisation of words into coherent statements by means of the logic of verbal syntax, and the intellectual-emotional organisation of notes into coherent statements by means of the logic of musical syntax. Nevertheless, the analogy is still valid in another sense for the overall emotional organisation of a piece of music is often quite similar to that of a poem or drama (Cooke, 1959:28).

There is a sense in which the generic qualities of the lyric poem can be associated with music. As Kramer notes:

> As a monological form, non dramatic music affiliates itself with lyric poetry, which also tends to privilege a single-subject position in which the authorial, narratological and focussing activities are merged (1984: 108).

Analogues of this kind are also discernible when viewed from the perspective of music through to poetry. As W.H. Auden says, music is always 'intransitive and in the first person' (1968: 79-80). Both music and literature, then, are seen as 'coherent statements' drawing on the logic of syntax, but they do so in different ways. Cooke does not specify in what ways they differ, and it would appear that if there is no commonality between the two systems in this manner then they are not related analogously, since an analogy demands more than vague resemblance or similarity in one area. However, one would question the initial proposition that there is no connection between the two, for as I have shown music and poetry share certain aspects of vertical and horizontal relations: and these, being structural, make it more of an analogy than Cooke will admit. It is not clear what 'emotional organisation' might be, but Cooke suggests the similarity of emotional organisation in the following way:

> Music functions very much like poetry in making a coherent statement out of conflicting emotions (30).

This is very much the organicist view of poetry, developed from the Romantics and refined in the work of the Anglo-American 'New' critics of the mid twentieth century. In this view, outlined earlier, poems are seen as unified 'objects' – sites of textual and emotional organisation that are ultimately coherent despite any apparent contradictions in the poems themselves. Poems are organisms that 'resist reduction to a statement, remaining open and infinitely interpretable' (Neubauer, 2001:18). Here we can see poetry being pushed into the aesthetic arena of music; it is not the linguistic site for transparent communication, but an aesthetic arena of ambiguity and polysemy. According to musicologists such as Charles Rosen and Cyrus Hamlin (cited in Lodato, 2001), who see the song-cycle as a literary genre, that same unity and organicism is evident when poetry and music come together. Suzanne Lodato is critical of this view and describes the organicist approach to song cycles as one 'in which words, lying at the top, provide access to the meaning, while the music lies at the base and supports the signification of the text' (2001: 103). The approach most directly in opposition to the organicist view is one that might be called 'hermeneuticist', following the work of the theorist Lawrence Kramer. Such a view 'proceeds on the assumption that poetic and musical meanings in a song do not correspond' (Lodato, 2001: 104).

The organicist approach, whether adopted for a particular art form or the arts in general, is a product, paradoxically, of both Romanticism and Modernism (that is, literary Modernism). If we take Walter Pater's view that music is the art form to which all the other arts aspire (Pater, 2005: 10) then it is a relatively simple step to seeing music and poetry, for example, forming a unified, coherent and organic whole when fused together in song. This is further reinforced by the Romantic and Modernist insistence on the 'musicality' of poetry, as discussed earlier.

It is clear, then, that music and poetry share some analogous and some structural

similarities, but that they differ in ways that those similarities are manifested. This should

not seem surprising given that, quite simply, they are different art forms and therefore

suggest different forms of aesthetic experience while sharing some qualities that are

common to all art forms. Our cognitive experiences of language and music also have

elements in common, despite the fact that some contemporary research on the modularity

of mind has shown that the two modes are processed in different hemispheres of the

brain.[6] As Aniruddh Patel states:

> Yet within our own minds our two systems that perform remarkably similar
> interpretive feats, converting complex acoustic sequences into perceptually
> discrete elements (such as words or chords) organised into hierarchical structures
> that convey rich meanings (2008:3).

As Patel goes on to show, the domains of language and music share some basic processing

mechanisms:

> These mechanisms include the ability to form learned sound categories,...to extract
> statistical regularities from rhythmic and melodic sequences...to integrate incoming
> elements (such as words and music tones) into syntactic structures... and to extract
> nuanced emotional meanings from acoustic signals (2008:4).

The theory that attempts to account for the functioning of these modes from a cognitive

point of view is that of conceptual blending.

Music, Poetry and Conceptual Blending

The union of poetry and music in song might seem at first to be a good example of what

cognitive linguists, following Gilles Fauconnier, refer to as a 'blended space'. This has some

affinities with the notion of 'double intentionality'. In a metaphor the tenor and ground

---

[6] See Brandt (2009) for a detailed discussion of the modularity of language and music processing.

are merged into one; in a painting the medium and the image are similarly fused; and in music the sound and the implied' movement' of that sound are experienced as one. Music is an intentional object of *musical* perception, while poetry is the intentional object of phonological, semantic, syntactic and pragmatic perception. The processing of language involves a recuperation of meaning from the representational symbols; but such symbolic recuperation is not what is required in the reception of music, for there is no semantic content to be recovered by the hearer. But it is not simply the case that the music 'underwrites' the semantic content of the words. Just as in hearing speech we do not separate pitch, rhythm, tone and tempo from the logical or semantic content of an utterance, so we do not separate the words and music in song as they are received, although we may well do for the purposes of analysis. In speech, the semantic content does not stand apart from pragmatic, phonemic and prosodic factors and in part gains its meaning-structures through context and use. Thus it would be naive to suggest that music and poetry are two separate systems that function simultaneously in song, but are ultimately discrete. It seems more the case that a new intentional object is created – one that hovers between two (or more) systems, blending more or less completely as the experience unfolds in perception.

Recent work in the cognitive sciences has focused on both the reception and perception of aesthetic objects and forms. The pioneering work of George Lakoff(1985) in the field of metaphor in particular, has had far-reaching influence in the consideration of human thought processes. Similarly, Gilles Fauconnier's(1994) work on mental spaces and in particular 'cross-domain mapping' has had considerable impact on a range of disciplines. The important element for our purposes in the analysis of song is the notion of the conceptual blend. First expounded in the paper 'Conceptual Integration and Formal Expression' (Fauconnier and Turner, 1995) the theory is developed fully in the authors' 2002 work, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities*. A

wide-ranging and far-reaching theory it attempts to account for all forms of human thought

and reasoning, showing that blending is a fundamental aspect of cognition in general.

Blending is also fundamentally creative, but it is more of a habitual creativity based in

human thought processes rather than some specialised creative process reserved for

particular people or occasions. In order to understand the world we habitually blend

elements and structures from diverse areas (or scenarios) to produce new understanding –

an understanding which is essentially creative. Fauconnier and Turner state that:

> Blends create new structures by allowing counterparts to be mapped to distinct
> elements, with distinct attributes, and by allowing importation of specific
> structures in the inputs. The key constraint is that we don't just have a union of the
> input spaces: only selected structure in the inputs is exported to the blend, but the
> overall projection will contain more structure than is available from the inputs
> …The 'whole' that we find in the blend is thus both greater and smaller than the
> sum of the 'parts' … we get a truly novel structure, not compositionally derivable
> from the inputs. Therein lies the creative force of such blends. New actions… new
> concepts…new emotions and understandings … emerge (1994:16).

It would be easy to see the union of words and music in song as an example of conceptual

blending but the theory is much more fine-grained than an attempt to account for simple

juxtapositions of structures or elements. Music itself is a process dependent upon

conceptual blending, where, for instance, in order to engage in the aesthetic experience we

map from the domain of space onto the domain of time, or, as we have seen, we construct

in sound something that is only sound but is at the same time construed as being much

more than sound. Similarly, the projection, in poetry, of the axis of selection onto the axis

of combination can be seen as a blended site, where one axis is mapped onto another. The

difficulties of any analysis of the conceptual blending involved in song are analogous to

Lotman's idea of 'semiotic overload', where there are potentially many different blends

possible. For example, metaphor is a blended space, as are the rhythms of poetry.

Similarly, melody and harmony can also be seen as a blended space. A melody is realised in

its harmonic context, while partly indicating or suggesting that context, or range of

contexts. In song, which is a combination of words and music (potentially a blend), there are thus blends within blends.

Lawrence Zbikowski is one of a growing number of theorists working on conceptual integration in music. More importantly for this study, he has focused his research on the phenomenon of song. Taking the essential elements of conceptual integration he states:

> In a conceptual blend, elements from two correlated domains are projected into a third, giving rise to a rich set of possibilities for the imagination (2002:17).

And further:

> Under certain circumstances, combinations of words and music, through the process of conceptual blending, create worlds for the imagination well beyond those that spring from words and music alone (18).

These are bold claims which need to be critically examined in the light of what has already been said about the nature of the relationship between poetry and music. The first problems relate to the notion of 'correlated domains'. For the domains to be correlated, they cannot merely be juxtaposed; a correlation already presumes some kind of functional or structural similarity in order for blending to take place. What is the nature of this correlation with language (poetry) and music in song?

Let us for a moment return to metaphor, the visual arts and the concept of 'double intentionality'. The metaphorical expression 'Ships ploughed the sea', as given earlier, can be seen as an example of double intentionality but also of conceptual blending. The two domains, agricultural and maritime discourse, are fused ('projected') into a third, the full expression containing the metaphor. The correlation is then to be found in discourse-types: one type is fused with another into a third element. In a representative painting, the concept of a face, say, is correlated with the shapes, outlines and colours of the paint: it becomes a painting of a face, not paint and a face. We might notice, however, that this correlation is of a different order to that of the metaphor example. The correlation of

different discourse types is straightforward, but the correlation between the physical manifestation of paint and the concept of a human face is harder to pin down. It can be seen, then, that the notion of a conceptual blend is itself is quite fluid. What is common to all these instances, however, is the notion of the mapping of one domain onto another, invariably to produce a third cognitive domain, the blend.

One important question that arises is whether songs in general – that is, the phenomenon of song, are *a-priori* conceptual blends, or that only certain songs in their manipulation and exploitation of the poetic and musical material, can be. Zbikowski is quite adamant about the contingency of blending:

> Although it should be clear from the foregoing, let me emphasise that not all songs will set up conceptual blends. Among those songs that do set up blends, some blends will be more successful ... than others (2002:255).

For Zbikowski, formulaic pop songs, for instance, cannot be blends because of the arbitrary relationship between the words and the accompanying music. The problem here is that for Fauconnier and Turner, conceptual integration (blending) is a cognitive activity, not something that a discourse may or may not possess. From a cognitive point of view, then, *every* poetico-musical setting must either generate blends or not. It cannot be the case that some songs will and some will not because it is not a theory reflecting empirical contingencies. In this case George Butterworth's setting of 'Loveliest of Trees' will be a blend (or combination of blends), as will Darius Milhaud's *Machines Agricoles* (1919), six Pastorales for voice and chamber ensemble, which sets texts taken from a catalogue for agricultural machines; for if we take the notion that the poetic principle is actually a cognitive principle in that it is a way of reading, there will be no fundamental difference in kind between the two examples given. The difference will be in the focus and intensity of the blends, not in their number, although this might also be a factor. The crucial difference once more is of degree, not of kind.

Zbikowski sees conceptual blending in the overall discourses of the poetry and music in question, rather than at the micro level. The songs he analyses – in the German Lied tradition – are said to possess 'commonalities between the complete discourse structure set up by the music and the complete discourse structure set up by the text' (2002: 286). This seems plausible, although to see the two modes as 'discourses' is already to presuppose some crucial level of blending. Zbikowski also presupposes the very correlations he says the blends establish:

> The theory of conceptual blending assumes that there are structural invariances between the input spaces of a blend: these invariances, encapsulated in the elements and relations of the generic space, are what make conceptual blends possible. In the case of songs, the invariances are between the mental space set up by the text and the mental space set up by the music. Put another way, the fact that combinations of text and music can give rise to conceptual blends suggests that there are syntactic correspondences between linguistic and musical discourse (254).

The problem here is that if the conceptual blend is contingent in that only certain songs are blends, then it seems difficult to sustain the idea that there are 'syntactic correspondences' between the two domains of language and music. Further, a blended space must be a site of conceptual unity, not merely one where two inputs share some correspondence.

However, the blending that takes place at a micro-level may have a significant impact on that at the macro-level. For example, the metaphor blending of the poem in question may or may not form one aspect of a further blend with some structural or harmonic aspect of the music. A crucial blend not investigated by Zbikowski is that of the vertical and horizontal relations of each of the 'discourses' as examined earlier, although he does make claims for syntactic correspondences between text and music. As horizontal and vertical relations are significant in both modes, it would seem pertinent to examine the potential blending between the various elements that encode those relations.

Perhaps the most readily discernible potential correlated domain is that of rhythm and its attendant metre. Poetic rhythm is in part determined by its metrical framework and the natural stresses of the spoken language: poetry in part is a result of the tensions between the two. In music, rhythm is a temporal stimulus, while metre involves 'our perception and cognition of such stimuli' (London, 2004: 5). In other words, rhythm is the stimulus to our perceptual construction of certain metrical and stress patterns. As Yonatan Malin states:

> There are...multiple forms of stress in musical settings, which may or may not coincide with verbal stress and the rhythmic shape of poetic lines. In addition to the accentual structure of musical meter, there are rhythmic stresses generated by melodic contour, dynamic accent, agogic accent, change of harmony, and other features (2010: 4).

The difference between poetic and musical rhythm in any song may not always be significant. As Malin notes, in the case of the Lied, many of the poems 'were intended from the beginning for musical setting' (2010: 4). Many in the tradition of English song, however, were more definitively written as poems – that is as texts intended to stand on their own. Here, then, we are likely to find a tension or disjunction between poetic and musical rhythm. As we have seen, metaphor is a blend, while poetic form is a blend of structure and content. As noted with the example from Culler (see pp.23-24), a text can become poetry simply by virtue of its formal arrangement on the page. In music, we hear not only sound but also movement and spatial relations.

The Conceptual Blending of Butterworth's Setting of 'Loveliest of Trees'

Zbikowski suggests that a key element shared by poetry and music is that of syntax, and it is this syntactic correspondence in particular that gives rise to the possibilities of conceptual blending. In order to investigate Zbikowski's claims it will be necessary to work through a specific song, closely analysing both the text and the music with a view to the

potential blending. George Butterworth's setting of A.E. Housman's poem 'Loveliest of

Trees' has been much discussed and recorded, and indeed is in some ways a paradigm of

English song. This second poem in *A Shropshire Lad* (1896, called after the first line,

although it is numbered but not named), has had a great number of settings and is the sole

Housman setting of a number of composers (Gooch and Thatcher, 1976: 377-80). There

are no settings of the first poem '1887', and none of the last, 'I hoed and trenched and

weeded'. In ignoring these poems the composers have, according to Banfield, 'lost a major

constituent 'of the volume's sense of span and unity' (1985: 240). Nevertheless,

composers have repeatedly ignored other poems, isolating a few and in particular this one:

II

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now, of my threescore years and ten,
Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a score,
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow.
(Housman 2009: 3)

This stanzaic poem is not set strophically by Butterworth, but is through-composed.

Goethe maintained that poems should be set strophically, for through-composition is

'thoroughly reprehensible since the general lyrical character is thereby completely

destroyed and a false interest in detail is demanded and aroused' (Goethe in Varcoe,

2002:66). This suggests that the poem's verse structure must in some way dictate the

music's, otherwise erroneous elements ('detail') are foregrounded. Such a view places

structure above all else, for in a repeated form each verse, no matter what its meaning or

mood, will be set against roughly the same melody (though there may be some harmonic change). The poem dominates the music but is paradoxically constrained by that music, resulting in a kind of 'levelling out' of poetical force where the vagaries of interpretation are not so evident. As Stephen Varcoe points out, any musical setting is bound to emphasise certain aspects at the expense of others. Despite local variations, a strophic setting narrows the range of interpretative possibilities, while giving scope for the words 'speak for themselves'. There is already an immediate opposition apparent in Butterworth's setting: a (mostly) regular stanzaic poem is set through-composed, robbing the text of one of its formal attributes.

Housman's text privileges a single, coherent perspective in the contemplation of an event or scene. This is the kind of poetry, as Auden noted, that is 'reflective; it stops to think' (in Sail, 2002: 49). On the other hand, the music 'is immediate; it goes on to become'(49). This tension between the reflective, static, and ongoing, developing elements – the complexities of vertical and horizontal relations – is what characterises the cognitive effects of song, its conceptual blend.

The poem is cast in traditional ballad-form rhyme scheme: *aabb* in iambic tetrameter. However, the opening line of the poem is irregular: 'Loveliest of trees, the cherry now' is characterised by the trochaic foot, with the initial stress on 'Love' and a falling away to 'liest', although one might describe the stress pattern as more completely trochaic (Love-li-est). As Adams (1997: 55-7) notes, trochaic verse is often used to signify awe or the suspension of reality. Similarly, Attridge (1982: 193) suggests that a trochaic opening encourages 'a falling rather than a rising movement'. Although Housman's poem is not in trochaic metre, the trochees at the beginning of the first and second stanzas do suggest both awe and a falling movement. The final line of the first stanza, 'Wearing white for Eastertide' is trochaic tetrameter. The shift from iambic to trochaic also occurs in the

lines 'Twenty will not come again' (L.6) and 'Fifty springs are little room' (L.10). Thus the

trochaic foot falls on the key words at the beginning of lines where they describe the tree

or refer to age or time. There is a sense of present stillness and quiet in the opening

stanza, the deictic[7] marker 'now' at once siting the experience temporally and standing in

contrast to time before and time after. Present tense verb forms ('is', 'stands') are

juxtaposed with the continuous aspect ('Wearing') to create a sense of 'now-ness'). This

sounding of the present become more insistent at the beginning of stanza two, where the

opening line once more signals tension through the initial trochaic 'Now of'. Again, despite

the 'now-ness' of the poet's reflection, the stanza is concerned with what has taken place

and what will not come again. In the final stanza the deictic immediacy set up in the first

stanza is forgotten, and the verb form is the modal and ambiguous 'will'.

The poem contains several instances of syntactic , in particular phrasal, repetition:

hung with bloom (L.2)
hung with snow (L.12)
about the woodland (L.3)
about the woodlands (L.11)
seventy springs (L.7)
fifty springs (L.10)
the cherry (L.1)
the cherry (L.12)

Such repetition is paralleled in Butterworth's setting and is an example of a kind of

syntactic correlation between the two modes. For example:

---

[7] From the Greek meaning 'pointing', deictic expressions locate the speaker in time and space,
typically, and are dependent upon context for their interpretation. Thus the terms 'I', 'here', 'now'
and 'this' for example, need a context of utterance before we can assign referents.

Here, the octave leap from 'hung' to 'bloom' and 'snow 'prefigures a holding on its second occurrence on the word 'snow'. The bloom is thus more fleeting than the (future) snow. Despite the fact that the broad formal elements of the poem – its repetitive structures – are obviated by the setting, internal formal features such as repetition are replicated. As an example of the Jakobsonian poetic principle 'bloom' and 'snow' are associated, as are the immediate 'woodland' and the imagined later 'woodlands'. 'Seventy' forms a paradigm with 'fifty' and the seen 'cherry' with the imagined 'cherry' of the last stanza. The patterns of repetition, not so easily discerned in the text divorced from the page, are reawakened by musical patterning. The tension, therefore, between the syntactic units of the poem and its poetic form, is rewritten in the appropriation of the text by the musical context.

The opening piano motif features a three-note descending scale. These downward intervals, expanding from thirds to fourths and finally fifths, have led Stephen Banfield to suggest that the opening is thus 'a graphic hint that the blossom is already fluttering off the tree to the ground' (1985:150):

Accordingly, the descending motif has a topographical correlation with the falling cherry

blossom. However, nowhere in the poem is there any reference to the blossom falling, so

this feature is *inferred* and then linked metaphorically to the musical context. The

metaphorical notion of 'falling' or 'descending' in music is not arbitrary, but necessary, a

'metaphor we live by'). As Eve Sweetser (1992: 5) convincingly argues, such metaphors

arise from the physical or concrete domains and are mapped onto mental or abstract

domains. Banfield further interprets the musical development as moving:

> through its statement at the words 'Wearing white' into the triumphal 'Eastertide'
> motive, where it is thickened into vaguely ecclesiastical block chords before
> returning to its original form, but now ominously shorn of its inward turn after the
> 3rd as the sense of departing time ... throughout the second stanza, begins to sink
> in (149).

Banfield's reading suggests that Butterworth's setting reflects an awareness of the darker

side of Housman's poem (noted earlier by Venables). Though the 'I' of the poem is young

and is looking forward to further encounters with the cherry, there is something chilling in

his consciousness of the passing of time. That passing of time, and the looking both

backward and forward find correlates in the alternating *rit* and *a tempo*, and *crescendo* and *diminuendo* markings in the score.

The personification of the cherry tree in the first stanza ('stands about', 'Wearing white') is a rhetorical blend where the human and the 'natural' come together. This blend is embedded in a further blend as the poetic voice is rendered musical and the whiteness of the blossom is expressed through climaxing block chords.

In his discussion and analysis of nineteenth century Lied, Zbikiowski describes the relations between the two modes of music and poetry in terms of Conceptual Integration Networks(CINs). These diagrams represent 'a kind of analytical snapshot of the elements and relations that make up the network, and that contribute to the emergent structure of the conceptual blend' (2002: 253). These networks comprise four elements: the generic space, the text space, the music space and the blended space.

The generic space is essentially some shared broad thematic category; for example, differing psychological states. Already we run into trouble here for two reasons. First, it is hard to see the extent to which music can encode or reflect a thematic category. Second, the suggestion of a generic space already presupposes some shared topography. The text and music spaces are essentially thematic descriptions of those modes and are part of the interpretative strategies involved in their close analysis. The blended space is where, on the basis of generic space correlations and text/music alignment, the topographical connexions are revealed. The blended space, for Zbikowski, is a kind of reductive, almost Schenkerian homology. Of blending in general he states:

> Conceptual blending is a dynamic process of meaning constriction that involves small, interconnected conceptual packets called mental spaces, which temporarily recruit structure from conceptual domains in response to local conditions (2002:94).

Thus mental spaces from each of the modes of text and music combine and draw on larger

conceptual domains, triggered by the context ('local conditions'). In order for this to

happen, however, there must surely be adequate mental spaces triggered by the text, and

these can only so activated if we are fully cognisant of the words and structure of that text.

In any sung text we are probably alerted to quite small bits of language – typically words, or

salient phrases. If this is the case then we are not even responding to the text's semantic

networks, let alone its syntactic complexities. To suggest, as Zbikowski does, that in song

(or certain songs) there is a cognitive or conceptual blend at the macro-level is to

presuppose a conscious awareness of various levels of semantic and syntactic activity at

the micro level. Yet it seems that such awareness must be piecemeal. Replicating the

model given by Zbikowski, a Conceptual Integration Network (CIN) for Butterworth's

setting of 'Loveliest of Trees' might look like this:
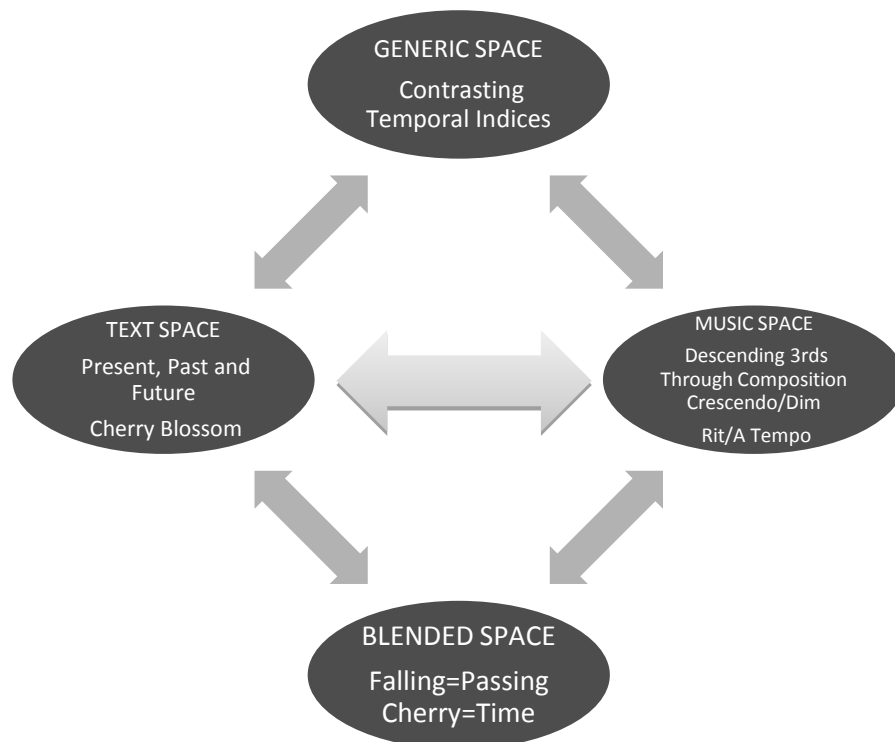
The generic space occupied by both the music and text is, as indicated, a broad

thematic space – the passing of time. This is a dominant thematic strand of Housman's

poem, indicated by the various semantic networks and parallelism outlined above. That

the music shares this generic space is more problematic to prove, as such a suggestion relies on a broad metaphorical interpretation of the music's meaning and structure. In a discussion of Schubert's Lied 'Trockne Blumen', for example, Zbikowski defines the generic space as 'contrasting ontological states' (2001: 262). This space is then mapped onto the music space which is defined essentially as a contrast between the tonalities of E major and E minor. The blended space then is described in terms of thematic links between the two modes. We might at this stage object that the linking of opposing (but related) tonalities to the thematic concerns of the text is to ascribe to the music a kind of verbal significance that it does not in fact possess. However, because the songs in question are conceptual blends the elements from one mode trigger (at a local level) elements from another to form a new aesthetic phenomenon, offering further possibilities for interpretation. It is not, therefore, a matter of crudely assigning to the music a meaning and significance that is both metaphorical and based on a reading of the text in question. Rather, it is a question of recognising those cognitive structures that have been mapped from one domain to another to create the blend.

There are two important reasons why the blends created by the combination of music and poetry are potentially rich. The first is that each mode itself contains blends or potential blends, poetry containing metaphors and other blended tropes (even if those tropes are somehow construed by the reader or hearer) and music a blend of sound and something that is not merely sound. The second reason is that the combination of two already-blended modes produces not one homogeneous blend, but a multi-blended site where blended spaces both unite and clash.

George Butterworth's 'Loveliest of Trees' is an example of the destruction of the formal elements of Housman's poem, the reconstitution of the poem's structure within the structure and context of the music, the blending of local elements within the text

(metaphors, short-distance patterning), the horizontal movement of the music and the vertical connexions assigned to both text and music as the song proceeds, and the triggering of blends-within-blends. These features constitute the very nature of that aesthetic phenomenon known as song.

Bibliography

AGAWU, *V.K. (1991)* Theory and Practice in the Analysis of the Nineteenth- Century Lied. *Music Analysis,* 11, pp.3-36.

AMBROS, A.H. and Cornell, J.H. (1893) *The Boundaries of Music and Poetry: A Study in Musical Aesthetics.* New York: Schirmer.

ARROYAS, F. (2001) When is a Text Like Music? In W BERNHART and W. WOLF, *Word and Music Studies: Essays on the Song Cycle and on Defining the Field.* Amsterdam: Rodopi.

ATTRIDGE, D. (1982) *The Rhythms of English Poetry.* London: Longman.

AUDEN, W.H. (1963) Notes on Music and Opera, *The Dyer's Hand and Other Essays.* London: Faber and Faber.

AUDEN, WH. (1968) *Secondary Worlds.* London: Faber and Faber.

AUDEN, W.H. (1979) *Selected Poems.* London: Faber and Faber.

BANFIELD, S. (1985) *Sensibility and English Song*. 2 Volumes. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

BANFIELD, S. (1998) *Gerald Finzi: An English Composer.* London: Faber and Faber.

BARKER, P. (2004) *Composing for Voice.* London: Routledge.

BERNHART, W. and Wolf, W. (eds)(2001) *Word and Music Studies: Essays on the Song Cycle and on Defining the Field.* Amsterdam: Rodopi.

BERNSTEIN, L. (1976) *The Unanswered Question.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

BLAKE, W. (1958) *Selected Poems.* London: Penguin.

BOWRA, M. (1948) *The Romantic Imagination* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

BRANDT, P.A. (2009) Music and the Abstract Mind. *Journal of Music and Meaning*, 7: 3, pp. 1-15.

BROOKS, C. (1947) *The Well- Wrought Urn.* New York: Harcourt, Brace.

CAMPBELL, M. (1993) *Henry Purcell: Glory of His Age.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

CAMPION, T. (1972) *Selected Songs of Thomas Campion.* Godine: Boston.

CHOMSKY, N. (1957) *Syntactic Structures.* The Hague: Mouton.

CLAYTON, M. (ed)(2008) *Music, Words and Voice: A Reader.* Manchester: Manchester
    University Press.

CLINE, E. (1992) The Composer's Use of Words: The Language and Music of Gerald Finzi.
    *British Music Society Journa*l, 14, pp.8-24.

CONE, E. (1974) *The Composer's Voice.* Los Angeles : University of California Press.

COOK, N. (1990) *Music, Imagination and Culture.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

COOK, N. 1998) *Analysing Musical Multimedia.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

COOKE, D. (1959) *The Language of Music.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

CULLER, J. (1974) *Structuralist Poetics.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

cummings, e.e. (1960) *Selected Poems 1923-1958.* London: Faber and Faber.

DAVIES, S. (1994) *Musical Meaning and Expression.* New York: Cornell University Press.

DUNSBY, J. (2004) *Making Words Sing.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

EAGLETON, T. (1983) *Literary Theory: An Introduction.* Oxford: Blackwell.

EAGLETON, T. (2007) *How to Read a Poem.* Oxford: Blackwell.

ELIOT, T.S. (1975) The Music of Poetry, in F.Kermode, *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot*. London:
    Faber and Faber.

ELIOT, T.S. (1974) *Collected Poems.* London: Faber and Faber.

EMMONS, S. and WATKIN LEWIS, W. (2006) *Researching the Song.* Oxford: Oxford
    University Press.

FAUCONNIER, G. (1994) *Mental Spaces: Aspects of Meaning Construction in Natural
    Language.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

FAUCONNIER, G. and TURNER, M (1995) Conceptual Integration and Formal Expression**.**
    Metaphor and Symbolic Activity, 10: 3, pp.183-203.

FAUCONNIER, G. and TURNER, M. (2002) *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the
    Mind's Hidden Complexities*. New York: Basic Books.

FINZI, G. (1954) The Composer's Use of Words. Part One. *The Finzi Journal,* 26: 1, 2009, pp. 7-20.

FINZI, G. (1954) The Composer's Use of Words. Part Two. *The Finzi Journal* 27: 1, 2010, pp.6-24.

FINZI, G. (1954) The Composer's Use of Words. Part Three. *The Finzi Journal,* 28: 1, 2011: pp.5-17.

FOWLER, R. (1986) *Linguistic Criticism.* Oxford: Oxford University Press,

FRYE, N. (1957) *Anatomy of Criticism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

FRYE, N. (1985) Approaching the Lyric in C. HOŠEK, and P. PARKER, *Lyric Poetry: Beyond New Criticism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

GOOCH, B.N., THATCHER, D.S. and LONG, O. (1976) *Musical Settings of late Victorian and Early Modern Literature*. New York: Garland Press.

HARDY, T. (1976) *The Complete Poems.* London and Basingstoke: Macmillan.

HOLD, T. (2002) Pa*rry to Finzi: Twenty English Song-Composers.* Wooodbridge: Boydell Press.

HOLLANDER, J. (1970) *The Untuning of the Sky: Ideas of Music in English Poetry 1500-1700.* New York: Princeton University Press.

HOOVER, P. (ed) (1994) *Postmodern American Poetry: A Norton Anthology.* New York: Norton.

HOŠEK, C. and PARKER, P.(1985) *Lyric Poetry: Beyond New Criticism.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

HOUSMAN, A.E. (2009) *A Shropshire Lad.* London: Penguin Books.

IHDE, D. (1976) *Listening and Voice: A Phenomenology of Sound.* Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press.

KEATS, J. (1970) *Poetical Works*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

KIVVY, P. (2002) *Introduction to a Philosophy of Music.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

KRAMER, J. (1981) New Temporalities in Music. *Critical Inquiry*, 7: 3, pp. 539-556.

KRAMER, L. (1984) *Music and Poetry: The Nineteenth Century and After.* Berkley: University of California Press.

KRAMER, L (2002) *Musical Meaning: Toward a Critical History.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

LAKOFF, G. (1985) *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

LAKOFF, G. and JOHNSON, M. (1980) *Metaphors We Live By.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

LANGER, S. (1953) *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art Developed form Philosophy in a New Key.* New York: Scribner and Sons.

LANIER, S (1914) *Music and Poetry: Essays Upon Some Aspects and Inter-Relations of the Two Arts.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

LEAVIS, F.R. (2001)[1948] *The Great Tradition.* London: Faber.

LERDAHL, F. (2001) Sounds of Poetry Viewed as Music. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences: Part VI Music and Related Cognitive Abilities,* pp. 330-337.

LERDAHL, F. and JACKENDOFF, R. (1983) *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music.* Massachusetts: MIT Press.

LIDOV, D (2005) *Is Language a Music? Writings on Musical Form and Signification.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

LODATO, S. (2001) Problems in Song Cycle Analysis and the Case of *Mädchenblumen* in W. Bernhart, and W. Wolf, *Word and Music Studies: Essays on the Song Cycle and on Defining the Field.* Amsterdam: Rodopi.

LODGE, D. (1977) *The Modes of Modern Writing.* London: Edward Arnold.

LONDON, J. (2004) *Hearing in Time: Psychological Aspects of Musical Meter.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

LOTMAN, Y. 1976. *Analysis of the Poetic Text*. (Trans. D. Barton Johnson.) Ardis: Ann Arbor.

LOWBURY, E., SALTER, T. and YOUNG, A. (1970) *Thomas Campion: Poet, Composer, Physician* London: Chatto and Windus.

MALIN, Y. (2010) *Songs in Motion: Rhythm and Meter in the German Lied.* Oxford University Press.

MCCALLA, J. (2003) *Twentieth Century Chamber Music.* New York and London: Routledge.

MCVEAGH, D. (2005) *Gerald Finzi: His Life and Music.* Woodbridge: Boydell Press.

MEYER, L. (1956) *Emotion and Meaning in Music.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

NATTIEZ, J.J. (1975) *Fondements d'une Semiologie de la Musique.* Paris: Union Generale d'Editions.

NEUBAUER, J, (2001) Organicism and Modernism/Music and literature in W. Bernhart, and W. Wolf, *Word and Music Studies: Essays on the Song Cycle and on Defining the Field.* Amsterdam: Rodopi.

NORTHCOTT, B. (2009) Towards an English Songbook, in accompanying booklet to *The NMC Songbook.* NMC Records.

OLSON, D.R. (1994) *The World on Paper: The Conceptual and Cognitive Implications of Writing and Reading.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

PATEL, A.D. (2008) *Music, Language and the Brain.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

PATER, W. (2005)[1906] *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry.* London: Elibron Press.

POPE, A. (1963) *Poems of Alexander Pope.* Edited by John Butt. London: Methuen.

POUND, E. (1954) *Literary Essays.* Norfolk and London: New Directions.

RIDLER, A. (ed) (1966) *Thomas Traherne: Poems, Centuries and Three Thanksgivings.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

RUSSELL, D (1987) *Popular Music In England, 1840-1914.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

RUWET, N. (1972) *Language, Musique, Poesie.* Paris: Union Générale d'Editions.

SAIL, L. (2005) *Cross-Currents: Essays.* London: Enitharmon.

SCHER, S.P. (1972) How Meaningful is 'Musical' in Literary Criticism? In W. BERNHART and W. WOLF (eds), *Word and Music Studies: Essays on the Song Cycle and on Defining the Field.* Amsterdam: Rodopi.

SCHER, P. (1992) *Music and Text: Critical Inquiries.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

SCRUTON, R. (1997) *The Aesthetics of Music.* Oxford: Blackwell.

SEBEOK, T.A. (ed) (1962) *Style in Language.* Cambridge: Mass.: MIT Press.

SHAKESPEARE, W. (1980) *The Complete Works: the Alexander Text* London: Collins.

SLOBODA, J. (1985) *The Musical Mind: The Cognitive Psychology of Music.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

STEVENS, D. (ed)(1960) *A History of Song.* London: Hutchinson.

STRAND, M. and BOLAND, E. (2000) *The Making of a Poem: An Anthology of Poetic Forms.*
    New York: Norton.

SWEETSER, E. (1992) *From Etymology to Pragmatics: Metaphorical and Cultural Aspects of
    Semantic Structure.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

TARUSKIN, R. (2004) The Poietic Fallacy. *The Musical Times* 145: 1866, pp.7-34.

THOMAS, D.A. (1995) *Music and the Origins of Language: Theories from the French
    Enlightenment.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

TIPPETT, M. (1960) Conclusion, in D. STEVENS, (ed.) *A History of Song.* London: Hutchinson.

VARCOE, S. (2000) *Sing English Song: A Practical Approach to the Language and the
    Repertoire.* Norwich: Thames.

VENABLES, I. (2007) A Composer's Approach to Setting A.E. Housman. Available at
    http://www.ianvenables.com/talks/70?task=view. [Accessed 10.05.2011]

WIMSATT, W.K. and BEARDSLEY, M. (1954) *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of
    Poetry.* Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press.

WINN, J.A. (1981) *Unsuspected Eloquence: A History of the Relations between Poetry and
    Music.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

WITTGENSTEIN, L. (1961) *Philosophical Investigations.* Oxford: Blackwell.

WORDSWORTH, W. (1969) *Poetical Works.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

ZBIKOWSKI, L.M. (2002) *Conceptualizing Music: Cognitive Structure, Theory and Analysis.*
    Oxford: Oxford University Press.

SCORES

BUTTERWORTH, G. 'Loveliest of Trees' in *Six Songs from 'A Shropshire Lad'* (1911). London: Augener.

CAGE, J. *Freeman Études Books 1 and 2* (Etudes I-XVI) (1980). Edition Peters.

FINZI, G. *Dies Natalis* (reduction for voice and pianoforte) (1951). London: Boosey and Hawkes.

RILEY, T. *In C* (1969).
   http://avaxhome.ws/ebooks/music/print/scores_modern/terry_riley_in_c_score.html.